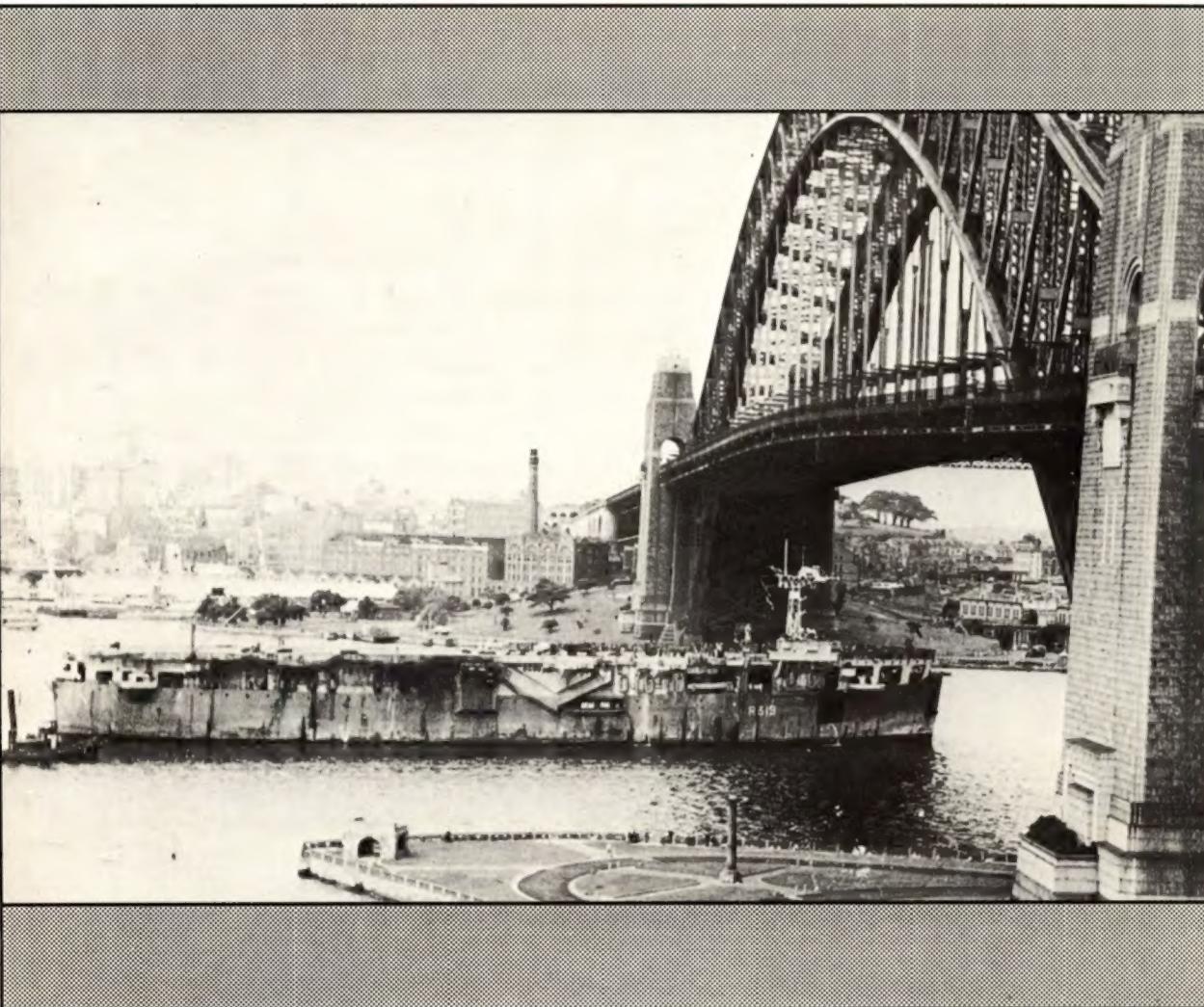


# A STRANGER NO MORE



JEAN GITTINS



Jean Gittins, daughter of Sir Robert and Lady Clara Ho Tung, was born and educated in Hong Kong. She was married in 1929 to Billy (W.M.) Gittins. They had two children.

As clouds of war in Europe deepened and loomed towards the East, Billy joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps and Jean, newly appointed Secretary of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, under-

took training in hospital administration in preparation for war - Hong Kong University was to be a Relief Hospital at the outbreak of hostilities. Elizabeth and John were sent to friends in Melbourne.

At the fall of Hong Kong, Billy was taken prisoner-of-war and, in 1943, was transported to Japan from where he did not return; Jean was interned with the rest of the Hong Kong University staff for the duration of the War. HMS *Vindex* brought her to Australia.

The book tells of Jean's experiences in Melbourne where she joins the Department of Pathology of the University of Melbourne to become Secretary to Professor Peter, later Sir Peter, MacCallum and, at his retirement, to Professor E.S.J. King and the Department of Pathology. Although many hands were stretched out to help her, it was to be seven long years before she could feel no longer a stranger in, what was to her, a strange land.

*To All The Outstretched Hands*

By the same author

*Eastern Windows - Western Skies*

*I Was At Stanley*

*Prizes, Books, and Papers (1879/1959):*

*A survey of Research Work and A Presentation  
of Contributions To Medical Literature from the  
Department of Pathology, University of Melbourne.*

*The Diggers From China*

*Stanley: Behind Barbed Wire*

Cover picture: HMS *Vindex* in Sydney Harbour, carrying former  
POWs and Internees to freedom, 2 October, 1945.

(Photographic Agency: W.A. Shearon, Sydney)

Dear Margaret  
united is appreciated

## A STRANGER NO MORE

Jean Gittins

jean gittins

June 1988

Domain Park  
South Yarra, Victoria  
Australia, 3141

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## FOREWORD

This is the story of how one of the first of our millions of post-war immigrants coped with her experience. Jean Gittins came from Hong Kong at a time when immigrants from East Asia were rare, indeed when immigrants from any place were few. The war had just ended and she reached Sydney in a warship. Her first shock came as soon as she landed: it is best that you read it in her own words. Then followed a series of setbacks, minor and major, while slowly she mastered her new environment, finding herself an indispensable role in the University of Melbourne.

After you have read this book, you will be tempted to seek her earlier works, all of which deservedly won wide audiences. In 1969 the South China Morning Post published her *Eastern Windows - Western Skies*, and years later I chanced to hear part of it serialised on the morning radio in Hong Kong. In 1981, Quartet Books published her *Diggers from China*, a pathfinding book which examined the Chinese on the Australian Goldfields in the 1850s and explained how they saw their new world and how they lived and worked. But the book which is the stepping stone to the present work is the story of her experiences in an internment camp at Stanley in Hong Kong where she was a prisoner of the Japanese from 1942 until 1945. Called *Stanley: Behind Barbed Wire*, and published by the Hong Kong University Press, its calmness and emotional restraint are as impressive as its courage.

I see that I am generously thanked, in the 'Acknowledgments', for encouraging Jean Gittins to write this book. I doubt whether she really needed

help, for she is more independent and determined than almost anybody I know. Though she has suffered in recent years from the effects of malnutrition while living behind barbed wire, she does not give in. That was also true during her 'lonely struggle in a land in which all was strange.'

I feel sure that in decades to come, historians will value this book as an illuminating source on Australia's largest wave of immigration as well as a window on Australian ways and attitudes after the end of the Second World War. The book is also a testimony to the author's own spirit.

November, 1987

Geoffrey Blainey

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## PREFACE

"It is not war but its aftermath that imposes so relentless a demand on fortitude and endurance. In time of war we are buoyed up by a spirit of dedication and supported by the prop of comradeship. When it is over and we are left to our own resources we might well wonder when things go wrong if our sacrifices have been worthwhile. Peace brought its own problems. In the years of weary rehabilitation many faced crises of a different nature and often these were more testing than the ones they had met . . . Many faced them alone.

"For my own part, my longed-for reunion with the children was marred by the shattering news of widowhood which met me on arrival in Sydney. The blow left me stunned, confused and afraid. However, Elizabeth and John opened a way to purposeful living and although I carried the after-effects of malnutrition my general health was relatively unimpaired. Many were left with neither of these mercies.

". . . as time wore on, responsibilities of single parenthood, anxiety about finance and housing and, most difficult of all, learning to live with myself in a changed situation, often undermined whatever courage I possessed. Though the children responded wonderfully and each time I foundered in despair, some outstretched hand would lead me back to greater effort, the early postwar years stand out as a time of lonely struggle in a land in which all was strange."

Gittins, Jean, *Stanley: Behind Barbed Wire*, page 163.  
(Copyright Hong Kong University Press 1982 and  
reprinted with permission).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No words can express the depth of my indebtedness to Professor Geoffrey Blainey for the part he has played in this work. Not only did he set the task when he saw that the state of my health was ushering in a period of listless senility, but his continued interest and encouragement, and the many hours he has given to reading and improving the manuscript, have been both an inspiration and a stimulus. Furthermore, the opportunity so presented to revive the poignant memories of those early postwar years has brought with it a greater appreciation that constancy of effort confers its own reward:

It seems to say life isn't  
As hard as I make out;  
There's grief, and rage, and duty,  
  
Obsession, guilt, and doubt;  
But patience looks on beauty,  
And sings beneath the knout.

James McAuley: *Flowering Lily*

Many, too many to name individually, have contributed to the recording of these memoirs but mention should be made of my daughter, Elizabeth Doery, and to a lesser degree, of my son, John, for coming to my assistance when memory lapsed - these memoirs are, after all, their story as well as mine.

I am most grateful to my friend and former associate, Wendy van Baer (now Perkins), not only for her generosity in typing the manuscript, but in supplying details, long forgotten, of experiences shared during the years we worked together in the Pathology Department of the University of Melbourne. The ready assistance of Mr Peter Harrop, of the University's Accounts Branch, in checking facts and figures relating to matters of mutual concern is also gratefully acknowledged.

Finally I have much pleasure in expressing my appreciation of Professor John V. Hurley, present occupant of the Chair of Pathology for permission to reproduce illustrations from the Department's own publication, *The Melbourne School of Pathology*, and to other publishers of publications listed elsewhere.

Allyn Redford, photographer in the Department of Pathology, copied the illustrations. The cover picture of *HMS Vindex* in Sydney Harbour was copied by his predecessor, Jack Smith.

Appreciation is also expressed to Mr Leon Comber of Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong and to Miss Anne Godden of Hyland House, Melbourne for advice in matters related to publishing.

To one and all I tender my heartfelt thanks.

October, 1986

J.G.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

During the years of my slow, slow acclimatisation to Australia I promised myself time and again that I would write my memoirs. Knowing, however, that they would not be flattering to the country which was kind enough to give me refuge, I always added that I would need to go abroad before those memoirs were published.

In looking back I now realise that it was not Australia's fault so much as my own. A good deal of the unhappiness I suffered had stemmed from an over rigid nature coupled with a simple inadequacy to cope. It was not that I was spoilt: my upbringing had been strictly disciplined. The main trouble arose, I think, from always having been in situations in which I was never alone. I was suddenly plunged into a world where all was strange - indeed, so strange that every minor setback seemed an insoluble problem.

I came to Australia at the end of the Second World War - after a long period of internment. Even during the internment, although separated from my immediate family, I had been among people I knew or with whom I had grown up. In Australia, there was just no one - or so I thought - to whom I could turn for advice or guidance.

And yet our children, Elizabeth and John, were here. Because of the threat of trouble spreading from Europe, we had sent them away six months before the outbreak of the Pacific War, in the company of friends who, returning to Hong Kong from England, had been allowed to land only on the condition that, after a brief stay, they would go on to Sydney where many British women and children had already been evacuated. Elizabeth at that time was a responsible eleven-year-old, John was a mere child of five.

During the first six months of our separation there had been a normal contact when weekly letters were exchanged. But war had intervened and in the years that followed our capitulation on Christmas Day in 1941 until September 1945, when I was evacuated, contact had virtually ceased.

When we were reunited in Melbourne, the innate stubbornness in my nature prevented me from turning to them when difficulties arose: so far as I was concerned, they were still children. I could not accept the fact that in the intervening years they had developed discernment and independence far beyond their years. They welcomed me and reached out to me, ready to resume the

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family attachment which should have been theirs as a right but I continued to indulge in self-pity, keeping them at arm's length and feeling at the same time alone and afraid. It was a strange situation but one which reflects much credit on the children: even though they could not understand my withdrawal they patiently waited for me to emerge from within the wall I had built around myself.

Sympathizers, too, tried to help me - kindly strangers who had befriended the 'refugee children from Hong Kong' before I arrived. They tried to extend their friendship to me but I shrank from their proffered hands on the assumption that they could not possibly understand sufficiently to be of assistance. Perhaps I was just a little shy.

Nor had I my husband's support. A member of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC), Billy (W.M.) Gittins was initially a prisoner-of-war in a military camp situated in Kowloon. The Hong Kong branch of the International Red Cross supplied each internee and prisoner-of-war with a postcard every month and messages limited to 25 words were permitted to be written. However, although the cards were filled and collected, mailbags seldom left the camps. Nor did incoming mail fare better. Bags were brought in at rare intervals with the rations but their contents were distributed only after months of delay - the excuse given was a lack of censors. Diligently I filled my card as month followed long month. They alternated between Billy and the children, with an occasional one addressed to a relative or friend in occupied Hong Kong, requesting some desperately needed item of clothing or food.

I received in return only two cards from Billy, the first when his friend and partner died after an epidemic of dysentery had swept through their camp during the first summer in Hong Kong. The message was couched in guarded tones as information of this nature was prohibited but it was obvious to me that he wished the sad news to be conveyed to his friend's widow. The second card, arriving three years later in mid-1945, explained that he had been ill but had recovered and the cherry blossoms were out. Knowing that flowering cherries did not bloom in Hong Kong, I realised that the rumour of his having been transferred to Japan was only too true.

Some internees received letters more frequently, mainly from Britain, but I received only two, perhaps three, from Elizabeth. From these I learned that she had had scarlet fever but had

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recovered and that both she and John were at school. John was growing fast, she wrote, and speaking 'the Australian language'.

According to Elizabeth, they received quite a few cards from me but only one from their father. Although months were to elapse before they reached Melbourne, the cards doubtless served to remind them of us so that when I arrived they had no difficulty in accepting me. I remember asking John one day whether he remembered me? His reply was spontaneous and surprising to me: 'Remember you?' he said, 'I would have known you'.

Friends had warned them that we would probably look different as a result of internment. Although I weighed only six stone (a decline from almost nine stone), I had lost neither teeth nor hair and was not even grey. Besides, their guardian, Dr Mary King, wife of Professor Gordon King, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, often spoke to them of their home life and, in an early letter sent soon after the children's arrival, Mrs King had requested snapshots of us. In the rush of preparing for their departure, we had overlooked the importance of visual reminders, nor did we dream that the separation would last for years.

World War II had erupted in Europe early in September 1939, when Germany and Russia simultaneously invaded Poland. Britain became involved only when Hitler turned his attention on her allies in the west but, ever since the Munich crisis of the year before, when Chamberlain's futile appeasement averted only immediate hostilities Billy, who was older and wiser than I, had felt certain that Hong Kong, as a part of the Empire, would ultimately be drawn in. With this thought in mind, he enlisted in the HKVDC - he wished to be ready when the time came to defend Hong Kong, he said.

The HKVDC, with a history going back to 1855, had originally been manned by Britishers of European origin, together with some European nationals but, with the succession of international crises during later years, it had been forced to assume a more distinctive local character. A Portuguese Company had been formed in 1924, a Chinese Company was recruited in 1938 and essential auxiliary units were added to place it on a Regular Army footing. Furthermore the Commanding Officer, the Adjutant and the Regimental Sergeant-Major became full-time Army appointments.

The Registration Ordinance of March 1939 had required all British subjects of European birth from 18 to 55 years of age to

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register, together with a statement of their qualifications. This was designed to be a preliminary step to compulsory service. British subjects of Chinese extraction, that is, Chinese nationals born in Hong Kong, which at that time entitled them to hold British passports, if desired, were encouraged to register voluntarily. A Compulsory Service Ordinance was passed four months later and Hong Kong became Britain's first Colony to follow her lead in introducing conscription.

Annual training camps were introduced and a Reserve of Officers was attached to the newly formed Corps. Finally, as an added inducement to the voluntary enlistment of the local population, the Colonial Secretary simultaneously gave an assurance to the Legislative Council that there would be no racial discrimination in the Corps in any respect. This was welcomed and interpreted by the locals to mean specifically that in the event of open war their families would automatically become, as was the case in the Regular Army, the responsibility of Government.

Being an engineer by profession, Billy joined the Field Company Engineers as a sapper but was soon transferred to Corps Artillery where he was made a sergeant. He was in fact offered a commission which he declined and when I voiced my disappointment, he explained that, as an officer, he would be forced to spend a good deal of his spare time in the mess, time which he preferred to spend at home with the children. The only advantage of being an officer, he added, would be if he were to die or be killed, I would in that event draw a higher pension (British military pensions being awarded according to rank); but as he intended to do neither the question would not arise!

As the situation in Europe worsened in May and June of 1940, Billy became increasingly anxious for the safety of the children. He was sorry we had not accepted an offer made by Mrs King to take them away with her the year before, as he claimed to recall pictures in illustrated magazines of starving children during the First World War, so that when an opportunity arose with Mrs Jack, his manager's wife, and their two daughters travelling to Sydney, he urged me to agree to sending Elizabeth and John with them. It was a hasty decision but, as subsequent events were to show, an eminently wise one and, as we had only a few days in which to get them ready, every moment was precious.

All too soon the time came for the small party to sail. It was 5 May 1941. As we stood watching the old SS *Nellore* pull away from

the wharf, I could see John's little hands clutching the ship's rail, trying to keep his tears back - I had told him there were to be no tears when we said 'Goodbye'.

It appeared that the voyage was pleasantly peaceful, the only excitement of note was of John being caught trying to reach for the ship's propellor from the porthole of the bathroom situated at the stern of the ship. He also lost his first tooth which fell from Elizabeth's first letter home - she remembered that I had kept all hers.

Mrs Jack and her daughters left the ship when they reached Sydney and, in the care of the Chief Steward, our two sailed on to Melbourne where Mrs King met them.

After the children's departure we gave up our house in Kowloon Tong and moved into a flat at King's Park. We missed the garden, naturally, but travelling time to Hong Kong was reduced. This was most opportune as preparations for war, begun desultorily in 1939, had intensified. The volunteers trained at Headquarters frequently in the evenings and were at action stations almost every weekend. Billy was in charge of the searchlights at Pak Sha Wan, just around the coastline from Lyemum Pass, which guarded the entrance to Hong Kong Harbour.

I was secretary of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong and, as the University was to be used as a relief hospital should trouble break out, I would automatically become Secretary of the University Relief Hospital, under the jurisdiction of the Director of Medical Services. I, too, had to undergo training in hospital administration at the Queen Mary Hospital. These and other preparations notwithstanding, most people were still unconvinced that anything would arise to disrupt their pleasant existence in happy, carefree Hong Kong.

To the foreigner living in the Colony and to the upper crust of its local population, Hong Kong between the World Wars was a virtual paradise. I recall with nostalgia its pleasant natural features of green hills and blue seas as yet unspoiled by the inroads of modern living, the joy of its white ocean beaches where an equitable climate allowed of almost year-round bathing, not to mention the quiet serenity of its everyday life under an autocratic yet benign Government. In the one hundred years of its colonial existence under British rule, Hong Kong had grown from the barren rock of Queen Victoria's day to be one of the brightest jewels of the British crown.

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Situated as it was at the entrance to the Pearl River delta, as well as having its own natural harbour, Hong Kong had become one of the world's busiest ports. Furthermore, being only a four-hour train journey from China's southern capital, Canton, it was ideally positioned to act as an *entrepôt* for trade between China and the West. In its century of progress born of British wealth and technical resources coupled with China's integrity and industry, there was hardly a country in the world with which Hong Kong did not have some commercial link. Goods, mainly free of duty, were inexpensive and plentiful - there was nothing one could not buy in Hong Kong - and although compulsory licences were so numerous as to give rise to the remark that a licence was required for everything except for the air its citizens breathed, a "Tax on Earnings and Profits", at a standard rate of ten per cent was not introduced until 1947, and then only as a result of direct pressure from the new Labour Government in London. Income tax as we know it was unheard of. The picture, therefore, of a progressively more prosperous Hong Kong, with its future potential, made its acquisition an irresistible objective to a greedy and ambitious Japan which, with an acute problem of over population besides, was bursting at its seams. Indeed, Hong Kong was not only desirable, its acquisition was imperative.

Japan set her plans cunningly, placing her spies in a variety of situations in whatever would seem to her to be strategic areas. She made a point of cultivating Hong Kong's prominent citizens, inviting them to functions, and to play golf at their exclusive club in Shatin. Two "farmers" in the New Territories were "good chaps" who often "popped over" to the regimental mess in Fanling for a drink. These farmers turned out to be the Brigadier and the General who later led the victorious Japanese Army into Hong Kong. One of the "barbers" in the Hong Kong Hotel barber shop was to become the first commandant of Stanley Civilian Internment Camp; another was later found to be a naval commander with the Japanese fleet. They were at liberty to wander at will all over the Island so they knew all our gun emplacements and displacements, while the Japanese Press Club overlooked the Hong Kong Naval Dockyard. Anyone else found climbing the high Dockyard wall to do so would have been arrested. Britain, however, was not at war with Japan, consequently nothing could be done to stop them - nor could they be deported even though they were known to be spies and watched. Even their mail was opened by our censors;

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but nothing was ever found that would incriminate them in any respect.

Historian George Endacott of the University of Hong Kong postulates that Japan's discontent had arisen as far back as 1919 when the terms of the Treaty of Versailles disallowed her claim to German assets in China in favour of returning them to China herself. Later treaties had limited her naval armaments to a lower ratio to those of Britain and America which she interpreted as a denial to her of great-power status. This and other restrictions had left her feeling isolated and disgruntled, thus promoting her aim of domination of East and Southeast Asia.

She accordingly embarked on a plan for expansion in 1931 when she conquered Manchuria, a small country to the northeast of China, to establish the puppet state of Manchukuo. With one foot firmly planted in the Asian continent, she now turned her attention to Peking. Following an "incident" believed to have been engineered by her, she took the opportunity of attacking and seizing Peking in mid-1937.

China had been in a state of turmoil since before the turn of the century, and the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912 did little to unite the country under one head. The seizure of their cultural centre, however, so incensed the Chinese people that factional differences were submerged in an all out effort to resist an enemy common to all. Under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek the Japanese advance was delayed, but, strangely, it was left to the great commercial centre of Shanghai to offer the stiffest resistance.

Japan threw in her entire resources of army, navy and air force. The first bombs were dropped on Shanghai in early August (1937), causing heavy loss of civilian life and, to show her contempt for the West, she machine-gunned the British Ambassador from the air as he travelled by train to Hankow. This was followed by the bombing of HMS *Ladybird* and the sinking of the USS *Pennay* in separate incidents. Chinese planes retaliated, attacking the Japanese aircraft carrier *Idzumo* anchored off "The Bund" in full view of the main commercial district of Shanghai's International Settlement but Britain, who had her hands full in Europe, made only mild protest.

The display of weakness on the part of Britain encouraged Japan to greater aggression and the world watched in amazement as Shanghai continued to hold out for almost three months against

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vastly superior odds. But primitive weaponry and human doggedness proved no match against a well trained, well equipped modern army. The inevitable fall of Shanghai was followed rapidly, with pillage, rape and unbelievable barbarity, by the sacking of Nanking - at that time the seat of the Chinese Government.

The Government withdrew 1200 miles westwards to Chungking, adopting a scorched earth policy on its way. The intention was to draw the enemy inland to lengthen the supply line and ensure at the same time that the fertile Yangtse Valley could offer no sustenance to the pursuing troops.

Instead of following the Chinese Government, however, the enemy turned southwards to attack Canton. On 12 October (1938) the Japanese navy entered Bias Bay and nine days after that the southern capital was in their hands. In another month the entire Japanese army had camped along the northern shore of the Sumchun River on the opposite side of which lay the natural boundary of Hong Kong's New Territories.

Hong Kong now viewed the situation with the greatest concern. She was already troubled by the unprecedented growth of population in an island that afforded little room for expansion - a population which had doubled in the ten years since 1931, for many northerners had left their homes to seek refuge in the British colony. At the same time business had boomed, not only because of the increased population, but the northerners had brought their wealth and enterprise; and although the housing situation was desperate new industries had sprung up like the proverbial mushroom. Those northerners who had friends or relatives squeezed into houses already too small for growing families; those who had neither friend nor relative and could not afford hotel accommodation put up matsheds on the hillsides. The more desperate slept on the streets.

In spite of protestations of goodwill and perpetual friendship, there were definite signs of unrest in the Japanese army camped on the northern shore of the Shumchun River. On Saturday 6 December (1941) the Hong Kong Government sent a mission across to investigate and report on the situation. It received a friendly welcome. Hong Kong was reassured. It was nevertheless decided to call up service personnel for duty and by evening bars and hotels were summoning all merchant navy seamen and officers to return to their ships. So it was that when Billy and I crossed at 9.30 on Sunday morning, 7 December, the harbour had been

cleared of all naval and merchant vessels. It was a strange sight indeed to see the little river gunboat HMS *Thracian* forlornly lying in midstream.

We went up to my office at the University. The Medical Faculty had moved into a new suite of rooms during the week: instead of the dark and dingy room, just large enough to hold our two desks pushed together with a single telephone running on a track back and forth between us, the Dean and I now each had a bright and airy office with separate telephones. But much had to be done to rearrange furniture and fittings and sort out files and records. Moreover, with the students' annual professional examinations beginning the next morning, I was in a rush to get things done. Billy had kindly come with me to help.

We had been working for about an hour when May Witchell, the Vice-Chancellor's Secretary, rushed in in great consternation:

'Billy', she said, 'hadn't you better go home? The "Vice" has just been informed that the Volunteers have been called up.' As well as being Vice-Chancellor of the University, Mr Duncan J. Sloss was Chief Censor, a wartime appointment. We tried to telephone home to see if there had been any message for Billy. The phone was engaged so we went home to find Billy's Sergeant-Major calling other members of 4th Battery from our flat. The Volunteers were to assemble at 3 p.m.

After a hurried lunch I drove Billy up to Headquarters. Little did I think that, other than a brief sighting I had of him behind a barbed wire fence, across a one hundred foot road, that would be the last I was to see of him.

I well remember that last visit. It was some weeks later when, on a bitterly cold morning, two Russian students and I reached the POW camp at Sham Shui Po in which Billy was confined. The students had received word that a friendly guard would be on duty at 6 a.m. on that particular day.

Buses had not yet resumed running so I decided that we would spend the night before at my sister, Grace's, house in Kowloon Tong, from where we would have less than a two-mile walk, whereas walking from the Star Ferry pier, it would have been at least a mile longer. Besides, there would be the extra time it would take us to make the journey from Hong Kong.

We arrived at 5.30 a.m. Billy was already there together with some of the other prisoners, staring into the darkness, waiting. A group of relatives and friends who had obviously received a similar

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message was standing nearby on the other side of the road. Some of the girls were sobbing quietly - the guards had been anything but friendly, they told us, having shouted abuse at them and threatening to shoot if they moved any closer to the camp.

All moved slowly towards the main entrance - the POWs on the inside; we on the outside of the perimeter fence, hoping all the time to meet up with a more amiable guard.

We reached the main entrance and I made a swift decision. Asking the students to remain in the background, I went up to the little police station manned by a few guards not far from the gate. Politely I made my bow - I had at least learnt that this was essential in any dealing with the Japanese, especially if a favour was to be requested. Then, with a mixture of pidgin English, Cantonese, Mandarin, signs and even a few Chinese written characters, I begged to be allowed to hand over some tins of food to my husband. Whether these guards knew that I would be stopped by the sentries at the gate or they were just possessed of a more humanitarian outlook, I will never know but, after a brief discussion among themselves, their spokesman nodded his head and indicated that I could go on!

Boldly I walked towards Billy. With only a few yards between us I heard much shouting behind me and, turning around, saw the guards waving their arms in a panic! They were trying to get me to turn back. Seconds later I saw a carload of *Kempeitai* (Japanese military police) driving up at high speed. They had chosen that very moment to pay a surprise visit to the camp!

The incident left me badly shaken. It had been a close shave and I was fortunate to have got off so lightly. I never summoned sufficient courage to try again.

But to return to Sunday 7 December. Billy and I had our last serious discussion while crossing on the vehicular ferry - I knew that he had for some time been concerned about the prospect of having to leave me alone in the flat when he was called up. He now asked me to promise to go straight on to the University after dropping him to see his close friend and former colleague, Professor of Physics, Bill Faid. Although Billy had taken out his degree in Civil Engineering and had been on the Electrical Engineering staff before he joined his fellow student James Mackenzie Jack, who was managing his father's firm of William C. Jack & Co., he had lectured in Physics at the University in the period prior to Professor Faid's arrival from England, hence their friendship.

Bill Faids wartime appointment was Assistant Censor and at the outbreak of war, he would automatically become Lay Superintendent of the University Relief Hospital. Billy now wished me to seek his advice as to what I should do now that he had been called up.

The Faids were delighted to see me and, hearing of the reason for my visit, Bill immediately said:

'The situation is certainly disturbing, Jean. Why don't you put together a few things when you come up in the morning and be prepared to stay over for a few days until we know what is going to happen? I am sure Jeanne would love to have you.' I was due to be billeted with them in any case as soon as war broke out.

Neither the Faids nor I had any idea that that stay, with the exception of a fortnight in early February 1942, was to continue into Stanley Camp, and then to last until September 1945 when I left for the city and from the city to Australia, and Jeanne for England and home. Bill, having lost his life in a tragic accident in camp, was by then no longer with us.

Remembering that I had sent our travel bags away with the children, I bought myself a lightweight suitcase on my way home. In spite of it being late Sunday afternoon, the shops in Kowloon were still open. After an early dinner I tidied my desk which took some time. Putting a few things in the case did not take long and, as I had the room, even though it was still quite warm I threw in my fur coat, which I was most thankful to have later in the icy winds of Stanley Internment Camp, where neither food nor fuel provided sufficient warmth for the body. The coat was a part of my trousseau in 1929. Although it was only a dyed marmot, it had a mink collar; my mother selected it when we went out shopping, remarking that the collar was mink and it would last a lifetime. I still have it.

I had just got into bed when the telephone rang shrilly. 'Wrong number,' the voice said and the line went dead. But it gave me a fright. It rang again at 6 a.m. This time it was Professor Gordon King, now Medical Officer-in-Charge of the University Relief Hospital.

'Come up as soon as you can, Jean,' he ordered. 'Don't wait to have breakfast - my "Boy" will give you something to eat. We are to be ready to receive patients at noon.'

As I prepared to leave the flat I noticed on my dressing table the miniature hand-painted ivory portrait of my mother done by Van Dyke of London. I picked it up and put it in my pocket. It was

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the only precious possession I managed to salvage from my home.

We had just finished breakfast and, as the clock struck 8 a.m. we heard a series of loud explosions which destroyed any complacency we might still have possessed. Rushing out on to the verandah, we saw clouds of black smoke rise from across the harbour. With a sickening feeling we realised that Kai Tak airfield was being bombed: By 8.05 a.m. Hong Kong's entire air power of three obsolete torpedo bombers and two antiquated amphibians, all with a maximum speed of 100 mph, as well as eight civilian aircraft, had been destroyed.

We soon heard of the devastating air raid on the American fleet in Pearl Harbour. That night news came through of the sinking of the battlecruiser *Renown* and the battleship *Prince of Wales* off Singapore and, with the involvement as well of Manilla, Japan's planned four-pronged attack on the Allies was well and truly underway.

Hong Kong's main defence lay in its army of four regiments: two British - the Royal Scots and the Middlesex - and two Indian - the Punjabis and the Rajputs - as well as the local Volunteers. Two Canadian battalions, the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, had arrived in November - just over three weeks before the Japanese attack. This reinforcement consisted of raw, young recruits, lads of 18 or 19 years of age, who had never before seen active service. Nor did they have the time to study the local terrain, so that, when the attack came, they often did not know whether they were coming or going. However, when they arrived on a glorious Sunday morning and we watched them march up Nathan Road to their barracks at Shamshui po, we felt somewhat reassured - perhaps we had, after all, not been entirely abandoned.

Simultaneous with the bombing of Kai Tak airfield, Japanese ground troops crossed the border to take the Royal Scots, stationed at Shing Mun Redoubt, by surprise. Their advance was rapid and they were soon in a position to shell the Island Colony. And shell us they did, continuously, during the afternoon and evening of the 18th, prior to forcing a landing that night.

I had received word earlier in the day that Billy was safe, but because its guns were out of action, the men of 4th Battery had been withdrawn. When night came, though, and searchlights still swept the harbour to pick out the small craft ferrying enemy troops across to us, I knew for certain that Billy was still at his post.

The landing was effected at one o'clock on the morning of the

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19th, along Hong Kong's northern shoreline, near the North Point power station which was manned by a veteran unit of four officers and 65 men, all of whom were over fifty years of age.

The group fought with singular courage but there was no question of their holding back the invaders beyond the afternoon. The heavy coastal batteries and artillery units along the shoreline, frantically put up at the last moment, had all been damaged by the heavy shelling of the day before and, with the fall as well of 5th AA Battery, at Tsai Wan Hill, 4th Battery was completely isolated. Surprisingly, with no guns and no supplies, they still held out until the 21st - a feat for which 4th Battery was commended. In view of the subsequent butchery in that region committed by the victorious landing troops, it is a wonder that any lived to tell of their experience.

I will not at this juncture enter into the different stages of the fighting nor expound on the valour of our defenders. It is sufficient here to mention that our losses were heavy and, after 17 days of heroic but fruitless resistance, the small garrison surrendered to an army of 62,000 fanatically dedicated men. It was at 3.15 p.m. on Christmas Day, 1941, that the white flag was hoisted over Government House.

Our troops, forced to lay down their arms, were soon confined in camps on the mainland. A month later, attention was directed to non-combatants. Notices were widely displayed summoning all civilians of British, Australian, Canadian, American, Dutch and other allied nationalities, carrying only what they would require for several days, to assemble at a large parade ground. They were marched through the city, to be bundled into cheap, filthy, vermin-infested harbour-front hotels which had neither electricity nor water. Here they were confined for sixteen days before being sent out to Stanley.

Stanley is a small peninsula situated on the south and more beautiful side of Hong Kong Island. It is roughly three quarters of a square mile in area. At the far end of the peninsula a large gaol had been built. Scattered around near the gaol were blocks of flats and single storeyed houses which served as quarters for the prison warders. In these quarters over 3,000 civilians were interned. The purpose was to segregate them from the main Chinese population so that Japanese authorities would have unhampered facilities for preaching a gospel of co-prosperity in East Asia to the locals.

There is no reason here to reiterate the hardships of over-crowding and starvation endured by internees - their story has been told in many publications. It is sufficient to say that in his speech to parliament Churchill, ever a colourful orator, described Britons in Hong Kong as being herded like cattle and fed like swine which, in fact, they were.

Americans were evacuated from the camp on an exchange basis in June 1942 and Canadian nationals were sent home in September of the following year. Many plans were made, having regard to destination and even preferred travel companions, for the evacuation of British nationals - plans which never materialised. It was said that Australia would not contemplate an exchange of able-bodied Japanese fishermen for a large group of women and children, and no one blamed Australia for standing firm in this attitude. It was therefore not until after hostilities had ceased in August 1945 that arrangements could be made to clear the British camps and September saw the first ships to sail with evacuees for Australia and New Zealand.

It had been my intention to stay in Hong Kong until word was received of Billy's whereabouts and future movements from Japan and, in fact, had my mother been living when the University Relief Hospital was taken over by the Japanese after our surrender, I could have claimed Chinese nationality and gone home instead of staying on to help with the administration under the new Medical Officer-in-Charge. The officer so appointed happened to be one of our staff members in the Physiology Department of Hong Kong University, Dr E.K. Lim, who was well known to me. He asked if, instead of going into Stanley Camp, I would stay on to assist him, which I consented to do for a short time on the condition that he obtained for me an "enemy alien" pass, which would enable me to move around the Colony freely, as I had in mind to again visit Shamshuiipo Camp and also to see what the new camp at Stanley was like.

The Vice-Chancellor, who now felt responsible for me, agreed but with the proviso that two students should be allowed to stay with me for my personal protection. The Chief Warden (of students' hostels), Professor Faid, had no hesitation in selecting two Russians, Serge Hohlov and his friend, Victor Zaitzev, who joined me in the Warden's quarters. One or the other invariably accompanied me wherever I chose to go, whilst the other "scrounged" for food - we had little money - but there was always a hot dinner

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waiting for us in the evening. This worked splendidly and we visited both camps although, as I said before, without much satisfaction in the case of Shamshuipo. I was never able to get close enough to have a word with Billy.

I stayed on at the University until Gordon King's escape into China in mid-February (1942) made it unwise for me to continue. He told me on the night before his planned departure at dawn the next morning and, in answer to my query as to how long he needed to get clean away, he said if he could have two days before the alarm was raised, it would be sufficient. I gave him three days before reporting his disappearance to the Director of Medical Services, Dr the Hon. P.S. Selwyn-Clarke. Selwyn was furious with me for withholding the information for so long, as he was personally responsible for both Gordon King and myself to remain out on parole. Did I not know, he asked, what a personal risk I was running in not reporting it immediately?

I replied that I knew, but did he not know that Gordon King's wife was looking after my children and I wanted him to get away?

To that he had no answer but he told me to be ready in two days' time; as my personal safety lay only in the large numbers in the camp. Under the circumstances he took me in himself and, making a slight alteration to my name, had me admitted as a patient into Tweed Bay Hospital. When he left he handed me a large jar of malt and cod liver oil, admonishing me to take no further risks as, if anything untoward should happen to me, he would never again be able to face my father.

I had given the matter of internment a great deal of thought and whichever way I turned I came to the conclusion that Stanley was the only course I could follow. I knew that Selwyn would object to this, from the point of view of my health, so the only alternative left to me was to try to force his hand. I decided that, for obvious reasons, I could not go home nor would Selwyn have agreed to my being on my own even if it were not for the fact that it had been looted and Japanese Army officers were in occupation. It was a large flat. In one of our trips to Shamshuipo, Serge Hohlov and I had called in to see if there was anything at all that could be salvaged. The officers who were in residence were quite civil and permitted me to look through the rooms. When I asked one of them what had happened to the rest of my possessions, he said in good English: 'I don't know, Madam, it was like this when we came.' All that I recognised were our two wardrobes and the refrigerator.

Most of my furniture had disappeared. The two wardrobes were a part of my trousseau, furniture being customarily included in Chinese families at the time Billy and I were married; so was the refrigerator. As I stood in front of one wardrobe I was curious to know if there could be anything worth asking for inside and, on being given permission to look, I opened the door. Out fell Japanese helmets. There was not a sign of any of our clothing or personal effects. I did not ask to see any more - it was too hurtful.

I could not go to my father's house on the Peak, "The Falls", either. It was so named because of a stream running through the property to feed a swimming pool and from that the overflow formed a small waterfall over the cliff into the deep gully below. It had been requisitioned when hostilities broke out to be occupied by an Indian mule corps, the animals being "stabled" under the bridge built over the stream. The enemy had given the property a gruelling time with both bomb and shell. The house was badly damaged and the animals, panicking, had bolted and several had run headlong into the pool. I understand that their corpses lay on the floor of the pool for a couple of years - long after it had been drained.

Nor did I wish to go to father's town house which was not far from the University for, from my sister Eva's reference to it as a "menagerie", I gathered that many of the relatives had congregated there for refuge. I had no desire to join them although, had my mother been alive, she would probably have insisted that I did so instead of going into Stanley.

I considered also joining my two sisters, Victoria and Grace, who were married to the Lo brothers, at their husbands' family home nearby. Although they pressed me to do so, the Lo's were also a large family and the problem of overcrowding would have been as bad as that at my father's town house. I did, however, take my jewellery case to them for safe keeping. The case was normally kept in safe custody at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank but father had had a celebration on 2 December, just six days before the outbreak of hostilities. We were rather obliged to wear our trousseau jewellery on those occasions - possibly to show, I imagine, that we had not disposed of them in any way! I had taken the case out to select what to wear on the day. After the celebration I had been too busy because of preparations for our forthcoming examinations to return the box to the bank and had kept it in the office together with the examination papers. This was

Just as well, otherwise I would never have seen its valuable contents again because when these boxes were eventually sent out to internees in Stanley money and valuables were no longer within.

As for my case, Serge Hohlov and I took it over to my sisters for safe keeping. They buried it in their garden and there it stayed until conditions became so bad in Stanley that I sent a message out for them to sell any or all of its contents, saving only my pearls and my engagement ring, and to use the proceeds to send food parcels to Billy and to me. I recall with some regret a lovely bracelet - a standard wedding present from my parents to their daughters - of 14 one carat blue diamonds set in platinum. They had to sell the diamonds singly and my sister Victoria kept two of them which she later had set into a pair of solitaire diamond earrings for me; but these, too, I was forced to sell later in Melbourne when we needed furniture and I was so short of cash.

The uncertainty of my outlook, the loss of my home and the heartbreak over my visits to Shamshutpo had strongly influenced my decision to join the camp in Stanley. Moreover, Billy's sister, Mabel, was already there, with her three children. Added to this was the possibility constantly in my mind that there would surely be an exchange of prisoners. If this actually came to pass and I was in Stanley, I would be eligible for exchange which would take me to Australia. Nevertheless I did not make the decision lightly. There was no doubt that conditions were deplorable; at the same time, I felt that mere physical discomfort and even starvation would be a small price to pay to join the children, especially now that Billy and I were separated. I was not to know that internment would be for the duration of the war, nor could I foresee the effects of starvation - nutritional disease in some form or other was to be the lot of almost everyone in the camp. Even so, were I to have to face the problem again, I am certain that I would not act otherwise. With the knowledge of hindsight, especially of what people in Hong Kong were forced to endure, I realise even now that I had made the right decision.

And so I became a voluntary prisoner of the Japanese in the Stanley Internment Camp and there I remained for the next three and a half years until the Royal Navy, under Rear-Admiral C.H.S. Harcourt, entered the harbour on 30 August 1945 to re-establish British authority. Three weeks later, I was on my way to Australia and the children.

Had I had my own way, my departure would not have been made

so soon but I was only a pawn in the hands of machinators such as the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Medical Services. It so happened that we had to be pronounced fit by a health officer before we were allowed to remain for whatever reason or purpose, however important. The Director of Medical Services simply ordered his officer to pronounce me "unfit". The Vice-Chancellor then made a promise that if I would leave him several copies of a letter to Billy, he would personally see to it that there would be a copy waiting for him wherever he might be transferred. He then sent me up to see the Adjutant at Volunteer Headquarters to arrange for my immediate departure to Australia. But the Adjutant was unwilling to take any action until he had made certain of my support when I arrived. The resultant frustration of their differing opinions on an overwrought condition brought on a flood of tears which so alarmed the Adjutant that he offered to dispatch me on the first hospital ship to leave Hong Kong! I felt however, that my state of health, although highly emotional, in no way justified preferential treatment of this nature. How could I take up a bed on a hospital ship when there were others in much greater need? I was therefore added to the Adjutant's list of passengers detailed for HMS *Vindex*, which was scheduled to sail on 18 September.

The Vice-Chancellor himself saw me on board to be installed in the only single berth officer's cabin and in the care of my good friend Captain Horner Smith who had helped me in my garden in Stanley. As he left, Mr Sloss patted me on the shoulder, saying: 'Remember, Jean, whatever Australia holds for you face it with your usual courage. There are many in Hong Kong who will be thinking of you.'

On reflection of his words, I now realise that I should have been warned, but if I had any foreboding, I chose to take no heed. I found later that it was rumoured in Hong Kong that Billy had not survived the rigours of a Japanese prison camp but, without official confirmation, Mr Sloss was unwilling to pass the rumour on to me: he thought it best for me to be with the children when I heard the news. Above all he wanted me to enjoy the voyage to Australia.

It might be appropriate here to pause for a moment's reflection to analyse the reason for the unusual concern with which I was regarded by both Mr Sloss and the Director of Medical Services. I was, without doubt, a member of the Hong Kong University staff and throughout the long years of our internment, the Vice-Chancellor had consistently done all that was humanly possible to



1. *The "Barren Rock" of Queen Victoria's day.  
Few thought much of the new acquisition'.*



2. *The Waterfront 100 years later.*



3. *My Father in 1949.*



4. *My Mother in 1928.*

My Parents - Sir Robert and Lady Clara Ho Tung

make life a little easier for all of us. He had arranged on his personal guarantee - to be repaid at the end of the war - regular food parcels and small credit allowances for us; but this was applicable to everyone; there was no reason, as far as I could see, for him to bestow any special attention on me.

In the case of the Director of Medical Services, he had been in Hong Kong for only three years and although he had won the friendship of many, including our whole family, I personally deplored his autocratic manner and the way he often tried to run the University's Faculty of Medicine. Being the Faculty Secretary, I found this rather hard to take. But I admired him as a person and for the way he had reorganised the Government Medical Department after having held office as Director for only three years. His mention now of my father gave me the clue to the reason for his interest as well as that of Mr Sloss.

My father, Sir Robert Ho Tung, was one of Hong Kong's better known citizens - perhaps the most well known in the Chinese community. He was born into a family of humble circumstances some twenty years after the Island had become a British Colony. Although he was brought up by his mother in the Chinese tradition, he was sent to the leading educational institution which at that time was known as the Central School, and later renamed Queen's College. There he learnt English. He often spoke of lessons beginning at 6 a.m. in the summer and at 6.30 a.m. during the winter months. He recalled that he would be given five cash (half a cent in Hong Kong currency) each day for his lunch, but would spend only two or three cash on some small bite, the balance being saved. This habit of resolute frugality was to remain a guiding principle in all his future business dealings.

By the time he was a young man, many of Hong Kong's early problems had been overcome. The first thirty to forty years had been a period of preparation when medical and health services were developed and schools, hospitals, churches and police stations were built. In this healthy economic climate, commercial enterprises flourished; Hong Kong was fast becoming Britain's principal outpost in the Far East.

My father began adult life as a school teacher but soon left to join the Chinese Maritime Customs in Canton where he first came into contact with the foreign business community and was at once attracted to the world of commerce. He left the Maritime Customs to accept a junior position with Jardine, Matheson and Co., a firm

which had led the foreign traders for half a century. Father's knowledge of English, together with his innate intelligence, proved invaluable as a liaison between the Company and the Chinese. He rose to be Chinese Manager before he was thirty, and indeed his association with the "Princely Hong" (*hong* is the Chinese name for a large firm) lasted throughout his long career.

Father knew what he wanted from life and possessed the ability and perseverance to get it. Besides, his connection with Jardine's offered him plenty of scope for foresight and judgement: when the firm bought property he followed suit in a small way; moreover he had the advice of the *Taipans* ("big bosses") for the asking: they admired the young man for his courage and enterprise.

From his humble background, Father became the doyen of the Eurasian community and was made a Justice of the Peace at the age of 35 years. The development of a mysterious digestive ailment at this stage curtailed his activities and almost cost him his life but with Mother's care and devotion and his own indomitable spirit, he recovered sufficiently to carry on with his business commitments although he was forced to lead the rest of his life as a semi-invalid.

Father declined to serve on the Legislative Council when invited to do so but gave his services liberally whenever they were sought at top level conferences, or he would act as personal adviser to the Governor-in-Council. The wealth which came to him at an early age made him a generous benefactor to the community in general: he was the first private citizen to donate a school for children of mixed parentage, and many institutions, including the University of Hong Kong, benefited from his philanthropy. He was human enough to take pleasure in any recognition given to him, one of his more satisfying honours being a degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* from the University. For his services to Britain he was created Knight Bachelor by King George V in 1915 and, forty years later, Queen Elizabeth conferred on him the further honour of Knight of the British Empire. Nor did his donations to relief work in China and his help to the Portuguese administration in Macau escape recognition by their respective governments. In business, his acumen ensured success in his dealings, yet he was esteemed and respected by all friends and associates; he held directorships in many of the leading business houses where his foresight and judgment were keenly sought.

My mother, Lady Clara, was a remarkable woman and a most

conscientious parent. She had two passions in life: her children's health and their education. Father had a large house on the mid-levels overlooking the harbour but as the children arrived Mother was not happy about the prospects of their children growing up in the heat of Hong Kong's summer months. Someone had told her that there was nothing to match the health-giving qualities of the Peak air for young children, so Father had no rest until he had obtained special permission from the Governor-in-Council for a Chinese family to live in that exclusive residential district. It might be of interest here to note that through the efforts of Dr Selwyn-Clarke the Peak District Preservation Ordinance of 1904 which permitted no Chinese or Indian to live on the Peak without a licence was repealed in 1946. During a period of over forty years, only one licence had been granted, and that to my father.

Father bought a cluster of three houses from a retiring businessman: two, separated by tennis courts for the family and a large staff of servants, and a smaller one for his own use. There were altogether ten children in our family: the last three, including myself, were born after the family moved to the Peak.

The air on the Peak was certainly fresh, the atmosphere exclusive, but facilities were practically non-existent. Braving such conditions would have tried the spirit of anyone but for a woman with a large family of young children it needed true courage. The isolation alone must have been frightening, for access was only by walking or by the funicular railway which gave an infrequent service. Roads were little more than footpaths and the journey between tram terminus and home was made by sedan chair for which we kept our own staff of eight coolies.

There was not a single shop to be found in the whole district so every simple need had to be procured from town. Refrigeration and sewerage were dreams of the future, cooking was done by wood or by coal and gas was used for lighting. Strange to say, there were street lamps and I can still remember seeing a young lad jogging along each evening and morning with a long stick to turn the lamps on and off. Added to this was the problem of fog which was particularly heavy during the summer months and, sometimes, for days on end, humidity would remain at saturation point and visibility reduced to no more than a few feet.

The Peak boasted of one small school - for children of European parentage. This did not worry my mother as she wanted us educated in both cultures. It would have been impracticable to send us to

school in town for, besides the travelling involved, this would defeat the purpose by having to give up the Peak air, so she engaged a Chinese tutor - a scholar educated in the old examination system, to ensure that we had a knowledge of the classics, as well as an English governess. We had a succession of these over the years. Twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, a French lady would come to give us music lessons. I am afraid poor Madame Mousson had rather a trying time with some of us although Eva and Grace were perhaps a credit to her tutelage.

We mostly had English lessons in the mornings and read the Chinese classics in the afternoons after which the current governess would take Grace and me out for a walk. This gave her an opportunity to meet other governesses whilst we played with the other children; but the outings were not always the happy times they should have been because our playmates would sometimes say that they no longer wanted to play with us because we were Chinese and had no right to be living on the Peak at all. Children are often unkind without meaning to be so and these youngsters were merely reflecting the attitude of their elders, for racial discrimination was widespread in Hong Kong at the time. It was not until after the Second World War when so many Eurasian boys lost their lives that Dr Selwyn-Clarke was able to impose his will on Government to repeal the obnoxious Ordinance.

And so we grew up healthy, reasonably educated and generally happy although two important factors were missing in our make-up. It was not Mother's fault - she was not to know that I, for one, would have to face the world where there were no servants to care for my daily needs, and where I would have to do my own cooking without any idea of how to cook. Nor did it seem important to her that we should have some idea of the value of money, or how to spend wisely any amount that might come our way. I remember how we went through a large slice of Billy's savings during the first two years of our marriage. It was not that I was extravagant for we had been taught always to be frugal because, Mother said, our future husbands would not be as wealthy as our father was so we should not overspend. My trouble was that I had absolutely no idea of budgeting or of the cost of food or household materials. My cookboy did the marketing and I settled with him each day for what he had spent. It did not take him long to spot me as a tyro and he could charge whatever he pleased with no questions asked. As for groceries and household goods these were ordered as required in

the evenings from the grocer, to be delivered the next morning. I soon noticed that the need for cleaning materials such as Brasso, Old Dutch cleanser and Johnson's floor polish appeared to be excessive, and remarked on it. I was told that in a new house such as ours, more cleaning materials than normal were required. I could not really believe this but hesitated to go further for fear that the cleanliness of the house might suffer. Long afterwards I was told that my servants had run a grocery store of their own at my back door!

I learnt from experience as the years went by, and by the time war came, I was reasonably well equipped to cope with the domestic situation in Hong Kong. The years in Stanley taught me how to manage without money and servants and I perhaps also picked up some knowledge of the principles of cooking. My messmates never permitted me to experiment with the precious extras I brought in from my garden (I was a good provider there); but I did teach them the art of cooking rice which not many non-Chinese did. It was not that I had ever cooked it myself but I had heard that there were two principles required in rice cooking: first to add as much water to the rice as would cover the back of one's hand and, secondly, never to lift the lid once the rice boiled until all the water had been absorbed. This was at first ridiculed as being too unscientific but, when tried, it turned out perfectly cooked rice.

I left for Australia, then, as Mr Sloss manoeuvred, and very much against my will. But honesty forces me to admit that I did enjoy the voyage, that is, when I recovered from a severe attack of malaria which broke out immediately we set sail and kept me in bed for several days. But the Surgeon-Commander was soon in attendance. He prescribed a course of quinine and placed me in the care of a kindly steward who attended to my every need and I soon recovered.

It was a delightful voyage. The weather was perfect and officers and men of HMS *Vindex*, an aircraft carrier converted from a merchant ship, were exceptionally kind. The radio and cinema shows nightly kept us entertained and five pounds of real money, distributed from a general collection, stirred a deep appreciation from us.

Arrangements were made for us to tour the ship from the bridge, where the intricacies of radar, at that time a new piece of navigational equipment, were explained, and down to the engine room where, because of the use of diesel fuel, all was cool and shining

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with polished brass. We dined with the officers in the wardroom and, above all, Horner Smith was a most charming and attentive travelling companion. I would not have been human had I not enjoyed myself.

It was not all idleness. I spent each morning typing reports and letters for Lt-Colonel W.J.R. Scott, DSO of Australia's *Gull Force* which had been interned at Hainan Island where they had led a torrid existence. Many of the men, quartered on the flight deck of the carrier, appeared to be in a shocking condition. The Colonel also sent many letters to the families of the bereaved. Lt-Commander J.D.L. Williams, RN, who commanded *Vindex*, had given up his suite for the exclusive use of the Colonel and an old model typewriter was provided for me.

I was privileged to dine at the Captain's table when the Commanding Officer at Manus Island, where we made a brief stop, visited the ship. He invited me ashore on the following morning.

Air travel is commonplace in these days of widespread commercial aviation but, in 1945, a 15 minute flight over the islands of the South Pacific was an exciting experience. My flight was made on a small two-seater plane which the British, when they took control of Manus Island, had exchanged with the Americans for a case of whisky. I was invited to climb on board, the pilot climbed into a seat behind me, started the engine, and we were off. As he banked the machine from side to side, we leaned over to wave to the natives who responded enthusiastically. They were obviously used to the little game.

And so on to Australia. Day after day of unbroken sunshine and calm, blue seas even as we negotiated the Whitsunday Passage to sail down the eastern Australian coast. We entered Sydney Heads early in the afternoon of the second day of October in the year 1945. From the flight deck of HMS *Vindex* we had a panoramic view of Sydney's fine harbour, the waters of which assumed an even deeper blue. And as the large flotilla of vessels of all shapes and sizes tooted us a gay welcome and followed in our wake all the way to our berth at Pyrmont, we had a taste of the warmth and generosity of Australian people.

HMS *Vindex* had been scheduled to go on to Melbourne but, on arrival in Sydney, she received orders to return immediately to Hong Kong. As I hurriedly packed my solitary suitcase I regretted not having informed Billy's sister, Charlotte, of my impending arrival. Charlotte had been evacuated to Sydney in 1941 and I would have been

able to go to her - the prospect of being alone in Sydney daunted me. However, knowing Charlotte as I did, I felt certain that, somehow, she would be expecting me and might even be at the pier waiting.

By the time I returned to the smoking room, visitors had surged on board. The immigration authorities had left, so I put away my passport and looked around for Charlotte. Charlotte was nowhere to be seen. But the personnel of the Department of Social Service were still present and, on hearing that I had no one to meet me, they suggested that I went along with them.

I felt a light touch on my shoulder and, turning around, I recognised the round, freckled face of Dorothy Jack smiling a welcome. The teenager whose mother had brought our children with her own two daughters to Australia over four years ago was now a grown and self assured young woman.

'Hullo, Dorothy! How lovely to see you. Who are you meeting?'

'Why, you, of course. Mummy is sorry she couldn't get along but she sends her love and wants you to come and join us.' Dorothy went on to explain that they were in a boarding house but they had made certain that there would be room for me.

'Have you any news of Billy, Dorothy?' - Dorothy's father had been Billy's manager.

'Sorry, no, Jean.'

'What about your father, Dorothy?' I was almost afraid to ask.

'Daddy died last September. He was sent to Japan, you know.' She was full of plans to return to Hong Kong and to get the old firm going again. 'There'll be plenty of work to be done and we must get in immediately.' They were a firm of electrical engineers - there would be plenty of work for those who got in on the ground floor, so to speak.

How brave she was! A year had elapsed since her father's death, and she had had the time to get over her bereavement. After expressing my sympathy I explained that I was expecting Billy's sister, Mrs Fisher, to take me home with her. I was nevertheless grateful to her and her mother for thinking of me.

Suddenly I sighted Charlotte, red-faced and carrying a look of deep concern. She explained that she had been told that the ship would berth at Circular Quay and, learning of the error after she reached there, had run all the way to Pyrmont - frightened lest she should miss me.

Charlotte then threw her arms around me and burst into tears.

'Please, Charlotte, do stop weeping, or you will set me off as well.'

## A STRANGER NO MORE

I have been on edge the whole day.'

Charlotte struggled to control herself.

'By the way, Charlotte,' I said, but not really expecting a reply, 'have you any news of Billy?'

"Billy is gone,' Charlotte said simply and began to sob afresh.

"Gone? What do you mean - gone?"

Charlotte replied, 'I'm afraid it is true, Jean. Teddy Fincher arrived on Sunday and he told me. He said he had no details but the news was indisputable. He sent his love. He couldn't face you himself. He also said that Billy's will and personal possessions were with a Dr Riley of the RAF to whom you should write in due course.'

I knew Teddy Fincher to be an old friend, cautious by nature. It must be true or Teddy would not have said so. The world which had beckoned so invitingly only a short while before now loomed frighteningly large. I had heard others say only that morning that there would be shocks awaiting some of us but I never thought that it would concern me. I turned to Charlotte in bewilderment and, somehow, between them, she and Dorothy got me ashore.

Charlotte took me home and put me to bed. I could neither weep nor eat the meal she had prepared for me. Nor would sleep come. I tossed and turned and as dawn broke I got out of bed and sat by the open window. I can remember the scent of roses that drifted in and as I watched the sun slowly break through the morning clouds thoughts came more clearly.

Charlotte had suggested that I stayed over with her until I had recovered a little from the initial shock. It was a tempting offer and one which I would have been glad to accept. I yearned to lean on her. At the same time I realised that it would only be a temporary respite - the sooner I accepted my responsibilities and went on my way, the sooner I would find my feet. I decided that I had no alternative but to press on.

Forty years have passed since that fateful October day when I arrived in Sydney and as October approaches yet again, my thoughts turn, as they always do, to that first October day. Perhaps this is the reason for the clarity of every detail, although it is said that one's powers of recall of events long past increase with age. At the same time I am aware that, in spite of a plentiful supply of neurones these, unlike other human tissue, do not regenerate so that, when the supply becomes exhausted, one is left with no neurones at all. This is a frightening prospect which cannot easily be brushed aside. More-

## INTRODUCTION

over, I am all too conscious that an assignment has been set and undertaken: work must now proceed before it is too late.

## 2 SYDNEY

Having made a decision to go straight on to Melbourne and the children, I began to get dressed. I soon found that in my hurry to return to the deck the day before, I had forgotten to pack my hair-brush and comb which I had left to the last to give my hair a final brush. This did not concern me overmuch as I thought we could easily pick up replacements in town. But, to my surprise, Charlotte gave a decided 'No.' They had not made brushes in years, she said, because all bristles had been turned in towards the war effort. 'You'll have to retrieve them from the ship,' she said. 'I can see no alternative. We'll call at the Naval Office after you have registered with the Hong Kong Government.'

A pleasant surprise awaited me at the office of the Hong Kong Government Representative. Mr G. W. Reeve, a schoolmaster at Queen's College before the war, had lectured to us in Logic at the University when my sister, Grace, and I were students. As a matter of fact, we cut most of his lectures because they were held from four to five in the afternoon on Mondays and Thursdays when we would be playing tennis at the students' Sports Pavilion. In any event his lectures were presented practically word for word from our textbook from which we felt we could just as well read up ourselves. We did this until he sent for us one day to tell us that he didn't mind us not attending his lectures but he could not sign us up for our examinations unless we attended the minimum number as prescribed in the students' handbook. However should we be present for the rest of the series, he would overlook our previous lapses.

Mr Reeve greeted me warmly and was kindness itself. He knew about Billy and enquired of my plans for the future. On hearing that I intended to proceed to Melbourne, he said it would be quite impossible for me to do so for several weeks because all transport facilities had been taken over by the military authorities for the movement of troops returning to other States. He promised to let me know as soon as he could get a passage for me. Meanwhile I was to get in touch with him if I needed any information or advice. He then gave me my first allowance with his blessing and we left for the office of the Royal Navy for permission to return to HMS *Vindex*.

We found that *Vindex* was no longer alongside at Pyrmont but

had moved to the naval dockyard for refit prior to her return to Hong Kong. But the Officer-in-Charge was sympathetic to my problem and, after telephoning *Vindex*, sent me to the dockyard in a taxi under the escort of a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). Seeing that her services were no longer required, Charlotte went home.

On our arrival on *Vindex*, we were met by a young officer who told me that they had located my brush and comb which were now in the Captain's care. He was to take me there as soon as I arrived.

Cdr. Williams at once asked what news I had of my husband and on hearing that Billy had not come through, enquired about my plans for the future. I told him that I had intended going straight on to Melbourne but a lack of transport was forcing me into an indefinite wait in Sydney.

Cdr. Williams expressed his sympathy and I thanked him. He then sent me, armed with my hairbrush and comb, back to Charlotte's in a naval jeep. As he said 'Goodbye' he remarked: 'I don't think civilians are really allowed on naval jeeps but I doubt that the police would bother you.'

Late that evening - it must have been near 10 p.m. - there was a knock at Charlotte's door. It was a police officer asking for a Mrs Gittins. 'What have you been up to now, Jean?' Charlotte asked, 'to get yourself into trouble with the police so soon?'

'I don't know, Charlotte,' I replied, 'I expect some officious policeman must have seen me on a naval jeep. Civilians aren't supposed to use them, the Commander said.'

'It is nothing like that, ma'am,' the officer broke in. 'We've had an urgent message for you from the Captain of HMS *Vindex*. He wishes you to telephone him at this number' - he handed me a slip of paper - 'I am to ask you to call him - no matter what time it is. He will be waiting to hear from you. He has an important message for you.'

'He realised we would have trouble finding you,' the officer continued, 'as all he could tell us was that you were staying with a Mrs Fisher at Rose Bay. You have no idea what trouble we had locating Mrs Fisher! And now you must telephone him without delay.'

There was an acute shortage of telephones in those days and Charlotte did not have one in her flat. 'But', she said, 'there is a call box at the corner of the next street which you can use tonight. And don't forget to take your purse, Jean. Look, here is some

change for you.'

The police officer escorted me to the call box and, on my assurance that I would be able to find my way back to Charlotte's, he left me to make my call.

Cdr. Williams must have been waiting by the telephone because he answered immediately. He told me he had made a reservation for me on the *Sydney Express* leaving Central Station at 8 p.m. the following evening. It was a corner seat in a first class carriage and I had to change trains at Albury for Melbourne. He told me I was not to worry because I would be well looked after.

He then went on to explain that he had telephoned a number of people after my visit to *Vindex* and eventually got through to someone who must have been the Commissioner of Railways himself. On hearing my story he had been most sympathetic. He appreciated my predicament and undertook to arrange for me to have a seat normally reserved for emergencies. There was nothing to pay. All I had to do was to call at the booking office and pick up the ticket. He then wished me a pleasant journey and promised to contact my relatives in Hong Kong to let them know of my safe arrival and all that had happened since.

On the following morning we tried to call the children in Melbourne from a neighbour's telephone; but they were at school and I had only a few words with their guardian, Mr Clucas, who kindly undertook to let them know that I would be arriving on the *Spirit of Progress* the following day.

Charlotte and Mrs Jack had arranged to take me shopping but when we were ready to set off, I could not find my handbag anywhere. Suddenly I remembered! I had left it in the telephone booth the night before! Frantically I ran to retrieve it - not thinking for one moment that it would still be there; but I had to try. The handbag contained not only all the money I possessed but my passport - it would be an almost irreplaceable document! To my utter amazement, the handbag was still where I had left it the night before! Either no one had had occasion to use the telephone or Australians must be the most honest people in the world!

Armed with all my wordly possessions I felt quite wealthy as Charlotte and I went into the city where we were to meet Mrs Jack at David Jones' store. We bought a hat - hats being worn in those days - then a dress, a pair of shoes and a few essentials. Shopping held scant appeal for me and I soon asked to be taken home in order to prepare for my journey to Melbourne.

Charlotte and I had an early meal and, just after 6 p.m., we left for the station. We called at Horner Smith's on the way. Just as Horner had expected, and feared, they lived in a tiny one-room apartment on the top of a city block in Elizabeth Street. His wife, Pat, had been evacuated from Shanghai before the Japanese attacked that city, and was happy to be in the centre of Sydney life, but Horner detested it. He longed to be right out of town where he could have a garden and feel the soil on his hands again. I promised to keep in touch.

The Sydney traffic was heavy and I was impatient lest we should be late for the train, especially when the taxi driver stopped to have a heated argument with a fellow driver whose car had scratched his. At long last we reached Central Station where I picked up my ticket. There was nothing left for me to do or say except to thank Charlotte, who was again in tears. So after another emotional parting, I tore myself away and stepped into an uncertain future.

### 3

## DESTINATION MELBOURNE

Clutching what was virtually a VIP ticket, I was shown into a corner seat by the window of a first class carriage. I found I was to travel backwards. Normally had I had a choice I would have taken a seat in the forward direction but, later, as the train moved out of the station and spare carriages and rolling stock passed before my eyes, I realised that travelling backwards had advantages denied to the forward traveller. For one thing the passing scene rolled slowly by instead of rushing at you and, after passing, it could still be enjoyed as it faded into the distance.

It was not long before whistles blew and green flags waved to indicate that all was clear and, punctually at 8 p.m., the *Sydney Express* began its journey to Albury. As the train travelled from the city to suburbs and beyond, lights gradually became fewer and farther between until only those of an occasional farmhouse could be distinguished in the increasing darkness.

We went through several short tunnels, then a longer one which I heard rather than saw because the sound was different. Finally we must have reached open country. Through the window stars shone brightly from a moonless sky of deep velvet. The dog star, Sirius, was easily identified and, being a star of the highest magnitude, it shed its light on the whole constellation of Canis Major which lay just by the right heel of Orion, the Archer. Across the Milky Way and by his other heel, was Canis Minor. These two constellations are known as the 'dogs' of Orion. During the long years of internment, Horner Smith, who lived in the flat below ours, had taught me how to identify some of the stars and constellations and how to distinguish planets from the stars.

Captain Horner Smith had been Jardine & Matheson's senior skipper on their Yangtse River fleet. He was transferred to head office in Hong Kong only a few days before the outbreak of hostilities in 1941. Billy and I had travelled on his ship, the S.S. *Sui Wo*, up to Hankow and back to Shanghai on our honeymoon and I was fortunate enough to be with him again in 1933 when, for health reasons, I was forced to spend several months in a sanitorium in the mountainous region of central China. I had Elizabeth, aged three years, and her amah with me and when we reached the small river port of Kiukiang where we were to disembark, it was 7 p.m. Instead of leaving us to spend the night in some small-town

lodging house. Captain Smith held up the ship until the following morning so that we could proceed straight up to the sanitorium. He knew that it was a precipitous journey lasting some four hours and the only transport was by light chairlift carried by two coolies with thick padded shoulder straps and a third man running beside it to take turns with the load. As luck would have it we were again his passengers on our way home, so I knew him rather well.

Horner had had a most unhappy time in Stanley. He was not initially in our part of the camp where I was billeted with Professor and Mrs Bill Faid. Nor had I known that he was even in Hong Kong, until he was later transferred to a room on the floor below ours. He shared the room with three people who detested one another, and so he kept more and more to himself. He became so morose that, when I met him in the early-morning queue for hot water and bade him a 'Good Morning', he would answer: 'What's so good about it?' I learnt at his approach to look the other way. As far as I knew he took on some kitchen duty and spent the rest of his time sitting by the hillside reading from "The Oxford Book of English Verse".

Conditions in Stanley Camp had become worse. There was not much we could do about the overcrowding but Bill Faid and I decided to try growing vegetables to supplement our diet. I was already pleased with my six tomato plants, a bed of shallots and some mint growing on our roof, access to which was gained by driving short angle-iron supports into the brickwork to form a step ladder. There were quite a number of these supports as well as loose bricks which could be purloined from the debris of war-damaged buildings when no one was looking; but there still remained the problem of acquiring cement to hold the supports. This was solved by persuading our neighbour next door to let us have a little from his store. He had been Deputy-Director of Public Works before hostilities and was now in control of whatever building materials we had in camp. In exchange for this, and some assistance with building three small beds in the alcoves and around the chimneys of the flat roof, he would be entitled to a third of whatever we managed to produce. But when it seemed inevitable that our stay in the camp would be a matter of years, we decided to do what so many others were doing, which was to level a small patch on the hillside to make a vegetable garden. Meanwhile I managed to beg a few seedlings from my friends in the police force and, within a few weeks after the ground was prepared, lettuce,

beans, carrots and Chinese cabbage were flourishing. We had also several rows of sweet potatoes and Bill proudly forecast baked potatoes for Christmas. The stoker of the kitchen fires was a jovial and obliging police officer and could always be persuaded to allow potatoes to be baked in the hot woodash after the rice was cooked.

Tragically Professor Faid slipped from our steps to the roof one day in mid-1943 and died instantly from a fractured skull. I was left to work the garden on my own. My messmates, however willing, knew little about vegetable cultivation, so they did the other chores and I managed reasonably well in the garden until the Japanese cut our mains water supply and we had running water for four hours on only every *fourth* day! There was absolutely no reason for this as, with the decreased population, the reservoirs held more than enough for our needs. Nevertheless there was no question of using this water for the garden as we had no storage facilities except a bucket and an old kerosine tin to which Bill Faid had soldered a small spout from a toy watering can he picked up from the hillside whilst grasscutting - a chore for the older men. Water for the garden had to be fetched from an old well more than 150 yards away. Moreover the weather in August/September was dry and hot and I had to admit that assistance was vital.

And who would have been more suitable than the erstwhile courteous Captain Horner Smith? Yet only a few days before I had been thoroughly annoyed to find him sitting on the bank watching me without offering help of any sort - in fact, I had to ask him to move before I could pass with my load of bucket and kerosine tin both filled with water! Then, to add insult to injury, so to speak, he had called after me: 'This camp will make a strong woman out of you, Mrs Gittins!'

The situation called for some finesse. I discussed it with my roommates. We made him an offer: in return for his help with the water we would let him have a quarter share of the yield. To our amazement he begged to be of assistance but would not agree to having any share of the food: 'I am doing very well on the rations from the kitchen,' he said, 'and I have neither the means nor the desire to cook so I would rather not have any extras from the garden. Please just let me help you.' We compromised by giving him a quarter share of whatever we cooked in exchange for his help, together with his ration of peanut oil - a dessertspoonful every ten days. All agreed that this was a fair exchange. He later confessed that he had not offered to help me before because he

was afraid we would think that he was after the produce from our garden!

From then on not only did he carry the water but he took the hard work out of my hands. He even joined the queue when the septic tanks were opened to supply the gardens with some much needed food. It was a nasty job. I doubt that, much as the garden needed nourishment, even I would have suffered the indignities of the septic tank. The following summer he built a small shelter with grass and sticks on the corner of the garden so that I could rest when the weather became too hot. In no time at all he had become his former courteous self. Poor Horner, I reflected as the train ploughed on, to be confined in a single-room apartment in the centre of Sydney! I hope he gets his garden soon.

To return to the stars I noticed that Orion had moved higher in the eastern sky to be followed by Taurus, the Bull which, according to Horner, was fabled by the Greeks to have carried Europa over the seas to Crete and, as a reward, Jupiter had raised him to the heavens.

The large red star in the group was Alderbaran, one of the 20 brightest stars in the sky, having a diameter 50 times greater than that of the sun.

Taurus was in turn followed by the beautiful Heavenly Twins, Castor and Pollux who, Horner said, were the brothers of Helen of Troy. They were placed among the stars by Jupiter as a reward for their constancy to one another. I watched Cancer (the Crab) and Leo (the Lion), as we had watched them time and again over the years in Stanley Camp. The constellations were the same - only their positions were reversed and Orion had stood on his feet rather than on his head! Horner never tired of telling me these stories and many others and repeated them many times with slight variations.

My thoughts turned to the children and I wondered if we could pick up the threads of our former life without their father being with us. John would remember little of Billy but Elizabeth and her father had been very close. In the all too short cable she sent to Hong Kong addressed to both of us, Elizabeth expressed the maximum of feeling with a minimum of words. I wondered if she had had help in its composition. Longing to come home, she had said, along with other expressions of deep sentiment. But, with Billy gone, there would be little reason for us to return to Hong Kong. Besides, I felt certain that it would have to be years before

Hong Kong could recover from the devastating effects of war followed by the neglect suffered during the Japanese occupation. Although most of the buildings were still standing, there had not been the slightest attempt at maintenance over the years. It was certainly no place for school-age children. We had best remain in Australia until, at the least, their secondary education was completed.

I must have dozed in my comfortable corner, for dawn was breaking when I again looked out and I could see something of the country. We travelled through mile upon mile of flat or gently undulating farmland broken only by small clusters of houses built around clumps of olive green eucalyptus trees. Flocks of sheep grazed lazily in open country with scatterings of cattle and of farmers, some of whom were already tending their crops at this early hour. Others drove horsecarts; others still rode bicycles along the rough, unsurfaced roads. We rushed past many small stations without stopping. It was all rather monotonous.

We were roused for a cup of steaming hot tea. The train was on time, the guard said. We would be at Albury in under an hour's time where we had to change for the Victorian *Spirit of Progress*.

I wondered vaguely why the change was necessary. Sydney and Melbourne were in the same country, were they not? My thoughts drifted back to China in 1936, when we travelled by express from Peking to Shanghai. Elizabeth, who was with us, was only six years of age while John, still a baby, had been left with my sister in Hong Kong. It was a long journey lasting two nights and a day but never once did we have to leave our carriage, in spite of having to cross the mighty Yangtse River on the way. The crossing was, in fact, negotiated with ease - the long train, separated into several sections being carried across the river on barges while passengers slept on in their *wagon-lit* carriages, comfortably unaware that the crossing had taken place.

The *Sydney Express* slowed down and screeched to a stop at 6.50 a.m. We gathered our hand baggage and, true to Cdr. William's promise, a solicitous guard arrived to carry my case and we hurried across the platform to the waiting broader gauged *Spirit of Progress* which pulled out immediately for Melbourne. I was shown to the same comfortable corner seat in a first class carriage and looked out of the window on the same rural panorama of crops and sheep with its sprinkling of cattle and of people. The *Spirit* carried a dining car and I must have had some breakfast



5. *Billy and me on the beach.*



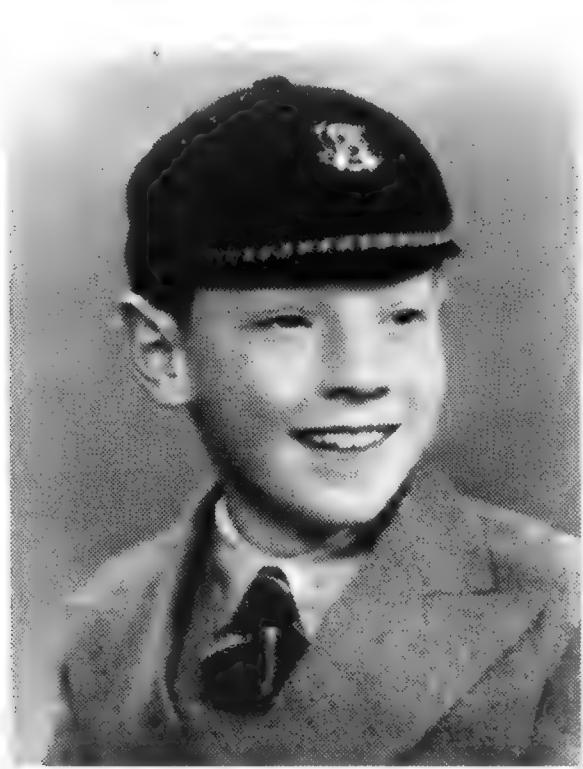
6. *Billy with our dog, Tarzan, at the foot of Lion Rock.*



7. *Elizabeth and John at home.*



8. Elizabeth.



9. John.

Five years on - in Melbourne.

## DESTINATION MELBOURNE

although I cannot remember doing so.

We stopped briefly at Seymour. Of all the many country stations we passed this was the only one to strike a faintly familiar note. It made me think of home again - of our family home in Hong Kong which stood on Seymour Road as well as my father's less familiar one in the British Concession in Shanghai, also on Seymour Road, where Billy and I spent part of our honeymoon.

Towards 11 a.m. I felt the train slow down and, punctual to the minute, the *Spirit* pulled into Spencer Street Station at the scheduled time of 11.05 a.m.

## 4 A BIG CITY

The children were there to meet me - with their guardian, Mr E.C. Clucas. How they had grown! I would not have known them but they found me. Elizabeth, at fifteen and a half years of age, had developed from a scraggy little girl - all arms and legs - to a well formed and attractive young adult. Her former sallowness of complexion had given way to an olive skin to which excitement had added a faint flush of colour. Her straightish brown hair had darkened to almost black and was now thick and wavy. It looked quite unmanageable but not unattractive and framed an open face from which her grey eyes shone frank and clear. They brightened her whole countenance.

John, having outgrown his early chest problems, was now a sturdy young lad of almost ten years. He, too, was slightly tanned, his fair hair darkened, his eyes a deep brown and intelligent looking. He was obviously happy now that we were together again. The long years of separation had strengthened rather than faded his memories of childhood days.

Excitedly they told me that their schools had given them indefinite leave of absence so that I could keep them with me for as long as I wished. They were all I had now. We must never be parted again.

These thoughts crowded in on me but they were soon dispelled by Mr Clucas leading us to his car in which he drove us straight to his home. He lived in Camberwell, he said, one of the most exclusive suburbs of Melbourne. All residents took great pride in their houses and gardens which at this time of the year were particularly colourful. On the way home, he told me how difficult it was to get petrol in Melbourne. Because of the war, there was a great shortage and everyone was rationed, so much so that he used his car only on special occasions. However he found it convenient to travel by train or tram; now that he was retired he seldom had reason to go into the City.

We soon arrived at 18, Victoria Road. It was an attractive suburb of which its residents were justly proud. The Clucas' garden was neat and colourful - small patches of close-cropped lawn around which were beds of shrubs brightened by rose bushes in full bloom. Not a leaf was out of place. It was obviously tended by someone who took pride in his work.

Inside, the house reflected the same care and pride - everything in its place nor could a speck of dust be found anywhere. There must have been a lounge room but I don't remember ever having seen it. We used mainly the dining room, at which five meals a day were served. The main meals - breakfast, lunch and 'tea' (dinner) - were interspersed with morning and afternoon teas. There was little variation in the meals which consisted mainly of sliced cold meat, boiled potato and some vegetable, with the exception of Saturdays, when a joint was roasted. Sliced cake was served for morning and afternoon tea. John was given a glass of milk at breakfast.

Elizabeth had the second bedroom, facing north which, I was told, had the best facing possible because of the sunshine in winter and the shade during summer days. I was to share the room with her.

John's bed was in a sleep-out at the end of the back verandah. It adjoined the 'cool-room' in which the cold joint stood in the middle of the floor. It was covered by an old fashioned metal fly shield. The cool-room had fly wire sides and door, most of which were pitted with holes. Blowflies crowded freely in and out of the room through the broken wire and, unable to get at the meat, would try to escape through the glass windows above John's bed.

In the corner of the cool-room stood an old ice chest. Electric refrigerators were not yet in general use in Melbourne in the mid-'40's although, in Hong Kong, almost every household had been equipped with at least one for the past twenty years or more. As a consequence of this, Mr Clucas was obliged to wait each morning for the ice-man before he could visit the local Camberwell shops for their daily supplies.

Elizabeth took me into the City to see Mr J.P. Adam, their legal guardian. Mr Adam was a Senior Partner in the firm, Messrs Weigall & Crowther, situated in an old building in the prestigious end of Little Collins Street. One of the first things I noticed on entry was a lack of modern office equipment. In fact, the whole atmosphere took me back to Charles Dickens.

Open shelves lined Mr Adam's private office, on which were placed bundles of documents tied with pink-coloured tape. After the preliminary "How are you?" and a remark about the weather, Mr Adam asked me my age and, on being told that I was thirty-seven years, he remarked lightly that I was 'a mere chicken' - a remark which belied his normal serious appearance.

## A STRANGER NO MORE

He then asked if I had given thought to what I was going to do. Naturally I had and replied that I should like to seek some form of secretarial work, preferably at the University, because this was the sort of work I had been used to in Hong Kong, where first I was secretary to the Dean of Medicine and, later, just before hostilities broke out, Council had appointed me Secretary of the Faculty (of Medicine).

Mr Adam showed much interest at this and said he thought I should see the Registrar of Melbourne University, Mr (later Dr) John Foster, with whom he was well acquainted. He undertook to introduce me as soon as I felt ready for work although he expected that I should like first to have a holiday with the children and immediately offered to look out for some holiday accommodation at one of the beach resorts. The offer was gratefully accepted. He said that his wife, Maud, would want to have me around for tea some time soon and suggested to Elizabeth that she might like to telephone Mrs Adam to arrange for a suitable evening.

Elizabeth was anxious for me also to meet their other friends; the first on her list were Mr and Mrs Webb who lived in a large house in Deepdene, a suburb adjacent to Camberwell.

I found the Webbs a delightful couple. They had met Mrs King and her 'large' family at their local church and had taken a special interest in the children from Hong Kong. The interest had deepened after Mrs King's departure - being a doctor, she was soon recalled to Hong Kong - and Elizabeth had found in the Webb's friendship great solace in the unrelenting unhappiness of her loneliness.

The Webb's own family of a daughter and three sons had grown up and all led lives of their own but they had staying with them, whenever he was home from College, a young nephew from the country. Stewart Doery was some four years Elizabeth's senior. They became great friends. Stewart's fine character, innate modesty and courtesy of manner endeared him to all he met. I felt truly happy at their growing attachment over the years, and when in 1952, after Elizabeth had completed her studies and examinations for the Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Melbourne and they were married, I felt literally that instead of losing my daughter, I had gained a son.

We visited the Webbs, then, at the first opportunity, having dinner with them. It was always a joy to do so, and they asked us often. These evenings were such happy escapes from the realities

of life and its many problems. Mrs Webb asked me many questions on that first evening. She had often heard stories about life in Hong Kong, she said, and was curious to know if they were true.

One of her first questions stands out in my memory to this day: she asked if we really clapped our hands to summon a servant and was very surprised to hear that, as children, we had been taught to treat servants with respect and courtesy which, Mother insisted, as human beings was only their right. As a matter of fact we had to address our amahs (women servants) as elder sisters and the men as elder brothers - the term 'sister' or 'brother' following the individual's own name. Adults would naturally drop the appellative. Every servant had his or her special duty and, as Mother preferred to bring them out from the country and train them herself, we usually had more than was customary in other households. The newcomers would be introduced by a relative who was already in our employ so there was always a general atmosphere of amity among them.

As we lived on the Peak we were somewhat isolated until we were old enough to make the long journey daily to school, more specially as it included several changes of transport, but as there were so many of us we never felt lonely. Mother nevertheless imported an English governess who gave us lessons and took us out for walks - there was a succession of them over the years. A Chinese scholar was also engaged to tutor us in elementary classics. She was anxious that we should be well educated in the traditions of both cultures. The unusually large number of servants fitted in well with our physical and domestic needs, giving us more time to devote to our studies.

Mrs Webb must have wondered how so many could have lived under the same roof! She asked about houses in Hong Kong. I told her that especially on the Peak they were much the same as houses in Australia. As Mother had been told that nothing could match the Peak air for growing children, Father was persuaded to make arrangements for us to live there. In 1906, therefore, he managed to purchase a group of three houses from a Mr C.W. Richards who was retiring to England. He kept a small one for his own use and Mother and the nine of us children shared the other two a short distance away. The two houses had tennis courts between them on two levels. One of the houses was of two storeys, its external appearance being rather like a Swiss chalet. As a matter of fact it was named 'The Chalet' although we referred to it as

'The Dolls' House'. I was born there.

Mrs Webb wanted to know how they were built, to which I replied that they were perhaps more strongly constructed than houses in Australia. She seemed a little offended at this so I quickly explained that they had to be of more solid construction because of the strong typhoon winds which frequently battered the south China coast during the summer months.

Mrs Webb's daughter, Edith, joined us after washing the dinner dishes in the kitchen. Edith was interested in nylon stockings about which there had been much excitement, the Americans having brought them over for their girlfriends. I told her they had just appeared in the shops in Hong Kong at the end of 1941, in time for Christmas, and my sister Grace's husband had given me two pairs as a Christmas present. They were supposed to be stronger than silk stockings and certainly looked and felt smoother. In fact I had a pair on - I had thrown them into my case when I packed on the morning I was summoned to report for duty at the University Relief Hospital. Edith became quite excited and dropped to her knees to have a closer look. She asked if she could have a feel of their exceptional smoothness and was, I felt, much impressed.

The evening passed too quickly. When we suggested leaving, Mrs Webb insisted on serving supper - tea and hot scones! It was no wonder that Elizabeth and John loved visiting this lovely, friendly home in Darraccombe Avenue, Deepdene, I thought, and was overcome with gratitude.

Meanwhile life in Camberwell consisted mainly of cups of tea and slices of cake in between the three main meals of the day. I was not ill but felt far from well. Having always suffered from a poor circulation it now troubled me more than ever. No matter what I did my feet remained cold at night. When John was sent for the messages one morning I decided to join him. I told him my problem, saying I should like to get a hot water bottle. 'You can't get a rubber one,' John told me, 'all rubber goods have been given over to the war effort.' He said that most people used old-fashioned brass or copper containers which held hot water to warm their beds - otherwise they did without. As I had neither, I did without. If only I had a glass of hot milk at night, I thought, but there was never a suggestion of one and I contented myself with a drink of water from the hot tap.

There seemed no sense in keeping John at home and I soon

sent him back to school. Now that he had seen me again he was quite willing to go. He was a boarder at Carey Baptist Grammar School in Kew and was in his last term at the Junior School. The Principal, Miss M. Metcalfe, told me John was doing very well and stood a good chance of being Dux of the Junior School. Boys were usually allowed one book a week from the school library but John devoured them so rapidly he was allowed to have one every day if he wished. He was also a favourite with the matron and her assistant in the boarding house. The Headmaster's younger son, Russell, was his particular friend and Mr Francis himself took a special interest in him.

Elizabeth was due to sit her Intermediate examinations in December but the school authorities said she was well up in her work and I could keep her a while longer. It was wonderful to have her with me and I leaned heavily on her. I wanted her to have her own room and bed though, so I decided to move out to John's. Knowing what young boys are like, I decided to remake the bed. I was horrified to find in it a great many dead blowflies on and under the cover. I did not count them but there would have been at least fifty or more. The reason for this was that John's bed was in the sleep-out adjoining the fly-screened cool-room from where the flies flew in and out at will. In trying to get outside they would hit their heads against the window glass which stunned or killed them so that they fell on to John's bed. I had never seen these detestable insects with their filthy habits until I came to Australia. There are flies, of course, in Hong Kong and especially in China - houseflies - which were bad enough and blue-bottles were plentiful under certain conditions but never a blowfly of the Australian variety.

I could see that John was happy enough at Clucases but Elizabeth was far from being so: she obviously didn't like Mr Clucas. I asked her one day whether she was happy there. She was too loyal to say she was not but her eyes filled with tears as she said: 'Of all the people who wanted us, I can't understand why Auntie (Mrs King) should have sent us here.' I made up my mind there and then that I would soon have to find somewhere where we could be on our own.

Mrs King had explained when we met for a few minutes before my departure from Hong Kong that many of her friends had offered to have Elizabeth or John; but she wanted to find somewhere where they could be together, at least during their school holidays.

She had met Mrs Clucas at the YWCA and had even been out to Camberwell to meet Mr Clucas and view their home, after which she decided that the couple would make ideal guardians; especially as not being certain of how long the war would last, Mr and Mrs Clucas would be more like grandparents rather than take the place of parents in the children's affection. I could only sympathise with Elizabeth; but I had first to find the money and the wherewithal with which we could develop this 'dream' home. I did have a nest-egg of some 3,000 Australian Pounds; but were I to spend this on a house, there would be nothing left for emergencies. Mr Adam had told me not to do anything rash.

We spent another pleasant evening at the home of Mr and Mrs John Adam. Maud Adam was a warm hearted and motherly person though not a great many years older than myself. As time wore on she was often to shield me from her husband's legalistic decrees. They had four teenage children - a boy, David, and three daughters, Jane, Mary Grace, and Isobel, who was without doubt her father's favourite. The girls also went to the Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC), where John Adam was a member of the School Council. Mrs King had met Mr and Mrs Adam through his sister, Mary Asche, whose husband taught at St. Stephen's Boys College situated in Stanley, Hong Kong. Mr Adam was the children's legal guardian. He generously extended his guardianship to me.

All too soon the time came for Elizabeth to go back to school and I missed her badly, more so because I had to endure Mr Clucas on my own.

Mr Clucas had previously lost no time in telling me that he had been Master of the Royal Mint, 'answering to no one but the King of England!' He praised John, telling me that he had been certain that neither Billy nor I would survive our internment, in which case he would have had no hesitation in adopting him. He wasn't so sure about Elizabeth. He had always thought that girls of 18 or 19 would be difficult but he now found that a girl of 15 was far more so than anything he might have contemplated. He told me also that Elizabeth was boy-crazy - this because at their school dance - some weeks past - she had very properly asked him, as her guardian, to suggest a partner for her. Each girl was expected to bring her own partner and most would have a brother, or cousin, or some friend. Mr Clucas told her he saw no reason why she could not dance with another girl from the school! She then asked if she could have a new frock for the occasion - she wore only her uniform at school. They

showed her one of Mrs Clucas's evening dresses, suggesting that she might wear that. I, too, was shown the dress. It was ankle length, dark red in colour, and heavily trimmed with sequins or beads - something quite unsuitable for a young girl of fifteen. Fortunately Elizabeth had initiative, and time. She wrote to her aunt Charlotte in Sydney, and Charlotte sent her one of her daughter, Marjory's. But Elizabeth did not wear that either as she went down with measles, which she thought was rather fortuitous; but the frock was kept for a future occasion. Mr Clucas harped interminably on Elizabeth's faults. I could discount most of them which I put down to sheer prejudice but his affirmation of her being boy-crazy rather weighed on my mind.

I tried to be as patient as I could; but when one is not well and one has to put up with the same remarks and jokes day after day, one's patience eventually wears out. Mine did one day, and when he repeated that he would have hesitated about adopting Elizabeth, I burst out: 'Look, Mr Clucas, if something had happened to me as well, do you think for one moment that my people would have left the children to your tender mercies? They would send for both children and have them home on the first ship!'

If Mr Clucas had a phobia it was the Chinese - a phobia which many Australians at that time shared. He kept repeating how unfortunate it was that Elizabeth was Chinese; also that she was boy-crazy. Even so, he had invited to his home one of his friends who had two sons of her age to meet her. His friend told him they had been very much impressed with her as a person. 'But, how unfortunate that she is Chinese.' the friend said. 'This being so, we could not possibly encourage anything further than a casual meeting!'

I might have been spared some of these tortures had Mrs Clucas spent more time at home, but she left at 8.30 in the morning and returned only in time to prepare for the evening meal. Florence Clucas (*née* Stillwell), Master of Science, was, in 1901, the sixth graduate in science of the University of Melbourne and the first to have majored in chemistry. She was a keen social worker and an active member of the YWCA, having been National Honorary Secretary over the depression years. Mrs King, having met her at the meetings, must have mentioned my children, a fact which eventuated in the children being sent to them when Mrs King left for Hong Kong.

Other friends, fortunately, had no such phobias - the Webbs,

## A STRANGER NO MORE

John and Maud Adam and, not the least, Elizabeth's friends at school. I recall that when I first arrived, I had many letters of condolence and of welcome from them all. I received invitations and gifts of flowers, including a particularly beautiful basket from Elizabeth's friends at PLC's boarding house, *Koorinya*.

I attended Sports Day at PLC. Mr Adam brought his mother around to where I was sitting. She was about 80 years of age but was very active and independent. She looked me up and down. She seemed satisfied with what she saw as she said to me: 'I wanted to see what Elizabeth's mother looked like.' Mr Adam returned a few minutes later to escort me to meet the Principal and the rest of the Council members with whom I had afternoon tea. Miss M. Neilson, the Principal, was small and of middle age. She was obviously a very competent administrator - I was told that there were over 800 students in the school.

Mr Adam escorted me back to where I had been sitting and Elizabeth soon brought Mr and Mrs Norman Jones. They had come down to see their daughter, Jeannie, who was in Elizabeth's boarding house at school. The Joneses invited me to spend some time with them in the country - an invitation which Elizabeth had previously conveyed - they felt certain that a spell there would help me regain my health. I was painfully thin at that time, being still only six stone in weight. Arrangements were soon made for Mrs Jones to return in a fortnight's time to fetch me. It was a pleasant meeting but I found Mrs Jones's voice with its strong Australian accent somewhat disconcerting.

Mr Adam had told me that he had made an appointment for me to go up to see the Registrar of the University of Melbourne. As the appointed time drew near, Mr Clucas kept repeating: 'I wish you weren't Chinese. Moreover, you do not have a degree. They will never take you, you know.'

I went nevertheless and entering the Registrar's office, Mr Foster came around from behind his desk to greet me: 'I believe we have a mutual friend in Mr John Adam', he said. I replied that I could not, as yet, claim Mr Adam as a friend but I hoped he would become one in due course.

Contrary to Mr Clucas's predictions, Mr Foster told me they would be very glad to have me at the University. 'We can get juniors easily enough. But it is very difficult to find someone with some age and experience such as yourself. I could always include you as a member of my staff but I think you would be happier in a

department. There are several vacancies at the moment but I understand that you would first like to have a rest with your children over their school holidays. This would be only natural', he added - and then: 'Perhaps you would like to have a chat with Miss Wardell who could assist you with your choice?'

He called Miss Wardell on the house phone and she came down to take me up to her room where she gave me a cup of tea and tested me with a few words of shorthand and typing. She told me that there was a vacancy in Mr Downes's Appointments Board, another with the Department of Tribophysics of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Organization (CSIRO) and a third with Professor MacCallum of the Department of Pathology. 'Professor MacCallum is a dear,' she said, 'but his secretary, Frieda Davies, who has been with him for 17 years, would naturally be somewhat put out to have to share her responsibilities with anyone.'

I found Miss Wardell to be warm and generous. She asked about my children and my family at home. She told me that she, also, was one of ten and she lived in South Yarra, near the Botanic (later Royal Botanic) Gardens. She promised that wherever I decided to go, she would keep in touch and look after me. Peggy Wardell remained my friend, my confidant and my champion until her sudden and untimely death almost 20 years ago.

Having met Miss Neilson at the School Sports, I made an appointment to see her at an early date. I was concerned at Mr Clucas saying that Elizabeth was boy-crazy. Miss Neilson invited me to dinner. She lived in a flat in one of the boarding houses. Over coffee I told her something of my difficulties with Mr Clucas, particularly about his criticisms of Elizabeth.

'If Elizabeth is boy-crazy,' Miss Neilson remarked, 'then the whole of PLC is boy-crazy. It is just a perfectly healthy, normal part of growing up and we encourage it in girls of Elizabeth's age. That is why we have Saturday social evenings and the annual school dance. Don't you concern yourself over this. A cause for concern would be if she were not so. Elizabeth is a lovely girl and we are very happy to have her as a student at PLC.'

I told Miss Neilson that Elizabeth had set her heart on leaving school after her Intermediate year as Mrs King had told her that the banks would accept girls at the age of fifteen years to train as clerks. Miss Neilson was horrified. "It would be criminal for Elizabeth to do this", she said. 'Her scholarship will take her

through to Leaving Certificate, and should she pass, as I am sure she will, she could go on to University. It doesn't matter what course of studies she takes up. She would do equally well in any of them.' She urged me not to consider allowing her to leave school after her examinations at the end of the year. And so it was that Elizabeth went on to Leaving and the University to do a B.Sc. in Mathematics and Physics. She reinforced this with a Diploma of Education several years ago and is now teaching those subjects at the Box Hill College of Technical and Further Education.

About this time I went down with another attack of malarial fever. As the illness took hold I became mentally unstable. If I had the means I think I might have tried to take my own life. I shivered and shook alternately with attacks of fever. Living became a nightmare and I prayed for release.

It was in this state of acute melancholia that I had a visit from my dear friend May Witchell, Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor in the University of Hong Kong. Besides our work, May and I had been through the war and internment together. At this meeting I was a misery indeed. But May was kind and understanding and most sympathetic and I wept all the more which probably did me a lot of good.

When Mrs Jones came for me from the country, I told Elizabeth that I didn't want to go. I felt I simply could not meet more strangers at the time. Besides, the thought of Mrs Jones's voice worried me. Elizabeth was aghast. 'But, Mother, Mrs Jones has driven a hundred and thirty miles simply to fetch you. You can't let her down like this. Even if you were to go up for a few days and then come back, it wouldn't be so bad. Won't you try to go?'

I realised how embarrassing it would be for Elizabeth were I to refuse to go altogether, so I said I would go but only for a few days. But my outburst had worried Elizabeth - it was so unlike my usual controlled self. She confided in Mrs Jones that, at times, I might not altogether be myself and she hoped that Mrs Jones would understand if I wanted to be alone.

Mr and Mrs Clucas warned me that I need not expect modern conditions in the country. There might not even be running hot water, and certainly not modern toilets. There would instead be pit toilets (outhouses), a short distance from the living quarters, to say the least.

I packed my few possessions with a heavy heart, convinced that the spell in the country would do nothing at all for my mental

health. I felt, however, even if living conditions might not be as comfortable as those in Camberwell and it would mean deserting the children - I knew, though, that this would not be for long. Had I not escaped I would most certainly have had a nervous breakdown.

This terminated the unhappiest period of that unhappy time. I was never to return. The Clucases had nevertheless afforded me shelter when I had nowhere else to go, and for that I was immeasurably grateful. It was just unfortunate that of all the kind people in Australia, Mr Clucas should have been as he was. I never saw him again.

## 5 OFF TO THE KELLY COUNTRY

During the war years, as Mr Clucas repeatedly pointed out to me, there was an acute shortage of petrol and many people, especially those living in the country and having to travel long distances, fitted gas-producers to their cars so that they could run on coke. Now that the war was over and petrol, though rationed, was no longer so scarce, the Joneses had had their car re-converted, with the result that they had virtually to run in a new engine.

Mrs Jones was a good driver and as it suited the car to be driven slowly, she was able to point out many features of interest as we passed them. Their home, "Avondale", she told me, was a property of some 2,000 acres. It was certainly not large as far as Australian holdings went but it was good sheep country and being only 130 miles northeast of Melbourne it was easy for them to slip down to see their children for, besides Jeannie, who was at PLC, they had their son, John, at Scotch College, which was also under the aegis of the Presbyterian Church and their younger son, Neil, in a smaller private school.

Since a good property is capable of running one sheep an acre, the Joneses had a flock of some 2,000 sheep. Their main crops were wheat and millet, and maize was also grown to feed the pigs. It would soon be shearing time, Mrs Jones said, and busy days lay ahead but it would be interesting for me - as a newcomer - to be introduced almost immediately to the main industry of a country which is reputed to "ride on the sheep's back".

In order not to tire me Mrs Jones stopped the car frequently on the long journey. At noon, we had lunch at a friendly restaurant. I was not hungry, I said, and I should like only some soup and perhaps a bread roll. The soup was steaming hot when served but a thick layer of fat floated on the top of each bowl, the very sight of which made me feel quite ill. To my immense relief, Mrs Jones, after taking a single look, searched in her handbag and, producing a small packet of tissues, she skilfully skimmed off the fat. The soup tasted delicious.

We had mounted the Great Divide and, driving on to the plains we passed many a station on which flocks were slowly but busily grazing. It was a means of keeping the grass down, to quote Mrs Jones's words. She went on to say that we were in what was

known as the "Kelly Country" and proceeded to tell me the story of that infamous bushranger.

Edward Kelly, better known as "Ned Kelly", she said, was born about a hundred years ago, one of three sons of an Irish convict. As they grew up the boys were constantly in trouble. Horse-stealing was their main pursuit - a pastime which had resulted in Ned having served a three-year term in gaol. By no means cured of his bad habits upon release, Ned and his brothers continued in their wild ways and were soon joined by a couple of desperadoes. The "Kelly Gang", as they came to be known, proceeded to terrorise the countryside along the border of Victoria and New South Wales. They held up stage coaches, robbed banks and plundered whole townships.

Despite a reward of 8,000 Australian Pounds offered jointly by the two governments, the "Gang" continued to evade the arm of the law and it was not until June, 1880, that they were trapped. In the ensuing fight with police, Ned was wounded, captured and taken to Melbourne where he was tried and convicted. He was hanged on November 11th of the same year.

With leisurely driving and the frequent stops it was dusk before we approached Benalla. The turn-off to Avondale, sighted before reaching the town, was on the road to Mansfield, a gateway to the Alps. Several wooden gates were negotiated before reaching the homestead, at each of which Mrs Jones had to get out of the car to open and, having driven through, she had to alight a second time to close. These gates appeared to me to be unnecessary obstacles to her progress; apparently placed at random, there seemed to be no reason for them. Mrs Jones explained that they were so placed in order to separate the different paddocks so that stock could be confined in one or another as deemed appropriate to the station owner from the point of view of the state of the ground cover, especially during the dry season. This was standard practice for all properties, Mrs Jones said.

I remember feeling completely exhausted when we arrived at the homestead and yet I had thoroughly enjoyed the journey for Mrs Jones, besides being an experienced driver, was a colourful story-teller. But it felt good to be able to stretch my legs, and after all I had heard about country houses and their lack of amenities from Mr and Mrs Clucas, I entered the Jones's modern looking home with real interest.

Norman Jones greeted us at the door. He said 'tea' would soon be ready; there was time for us to have a wash and then join him

for a glass of sherry.

I felt better after the wash and the sherry was pleasant but, in spite of having had practically nothing to eat the whole day, I could not, I felt, face up to a meal which was sure to be of generous proportions such as would be served in a country home and I asked to be excused. Mr and Mrs Jones appeared to understand and were not at all offended so Thelma - by that time we were on first name terms - put me to bed. But I was over-tired and I felt the fever rise again. It was some hours before I dropped off to what seemed to be a troubled sleep.

The sun was well up when I awoke feeling surprisingly refreshed. Thelma drew back the curtains and daylight streamed in. Surprisingly, too, the fever had left me and when Thelma brought in a breakfast tray a few minutes later, I was able to do justice to the freshly made tea, eggs and bacon and hot buttered toast. It was the first meal I had enjoyed for many a day.

Thelma suggested that I spent the day in bed. This seemed a good idea so, after she had relieved me of the breakfast tray I lay back and gave myself up to relaxed contemplation.

How peaceful it was; how soothing the atmosphere. Thelma Jones' thoughtfulness was heartwarming. She had told me on the way up that since Norman could not take an active role in the fighting they had longed to make up to us for what we had lost. How fortunate it was that I had given way to Elizabeth's persuasion and overcome my initial hesitancy to come here. I felt more settled already and wondered how long I was expected to stay? I had asked Thelma, hesitantly, on the way up; but her reply had been vague: 'Just as long as you would like to', she had said. I didn't know her well enough at that time to believe that she really meant what she said; I was as yet lacking in perception and could not believe that anyone could be quite so vague in so delicate a matter. Nevertheless I decided to tread cautiously and to think in terms of a fortnight or so.

I looked around the room. It was pretty and light and altogether charming. The low-silled picture window framed the colourful tops of a bed of spring flowers in full bloom. Mixed antirrhinums, flanked by pink and blue larkspurs and delphiniums, which vied with one another in a lavish display of arrogance - their seeds seemingly scattered at random, had obviously been sown with careful forethought. I found on going into the garden later that they formed a background to a mixed border of perennials and

annuals, for the bed was filled with masses of mignonettes, pansies, violets and phlox as well as a variety of bedding plants. The bed was close to the house so that flowers alone adorned the bottom of the windowpane above the flowers stretched a wide expanse of paddocks and green pastures which extended away to hills and trees beyond.

A chorus of strange cries attracted my attention. As it drew closer, I thought it was not unlike the sound made by a litter of very young puppies - although these cries were at least an octave higher and rather more tuneful. It was strange, though, that when telling me about "Pooh" the cat and "Skipper" the collie Thelma had not mentioned puppies. I determined to investigate - but later. In actual fact it was not until some twenty years later, after I had come to live in South Yarra and across the road from the Royal Botanic Gardens, that I found that the strange cries were made by magpies of a morning! Domain Road at that time had not as yet been spoiled by the smog and noise of city traffic, and magpies as well as sulphur crested cockatoos frequented the Gardens. Seagulls alone fly over these days - eager scavengers for the bits of food carelessly left by weekend visitors.

Fast moving shadows, loud screeches, and the sound of heavy flapping wings intruded and I looked out in time to catch sight of a flock of white cockatoos, yellow crests flared, sweep by the homestead to settle on the branches of a solitary eucalypt in the nearest paddock. I jumped out of bed. How could I waste this beautiful morning lying in when the promise of so many new interests beckoned?

I was soon dressed and, my bed made, I wandered down the passage towards the kitchen. As I passed the several doorways I could see that there was a picture window in every room, through each of which the outlook was slightly different yet all presented a vision of beauty and tranquility so far removed from the drabness of prison camp and the hurly burly of large cities. It is no wonder that Avondale bred idealists such as Thelma and Norman Jones.

The kitchen was a hive of activity. Thelma looked questioningly at me and I explained that I couldn't possibly waste so beautiful a morning in bed when there was so much to interest me outside.

I was introduced to Grace, the maid, and to Albert, the farm-hand, who had come in to confirm a tentative arrangement that the shearers would be arriving after the week-end. This meant five meals a day for the shearers alone - morning and afternoon teas being meals in themselves - because the theory was that the better

they were fed, the better they worked and a first-rate shearer could manage a couple of hundred fleeces a day. Also as they were to "live in" there would be other preparations to be attended to besides Grace's normal duties. She must be a wonder, I thought; I shall have to make myself useful or at the very least refrain from giving her too much additional work.

The weather was perfect. Crisp, cool mornings followed by warm, sunny days. The nights were frosty and the paddocks would be covered with a carpet of frozen dew. I had never before seen a good frost although, on very cold mornings since living in Melbourne, I have witnessed many such a sight on my way along St Kilda Road to the University of Melbourne when heavy frosts would lie on the lawns of the Domain, making them sparkle like small lakes studded with tiny diamonds.

I spent much time in the garden weeding the flower beds or pulling up plants which were spent. Weeding was easy work as the soil was rich and friable and it felt good to be handling it again. But flies were a dreadful menace. Were I to step outside for even a moment they would descend on me like bees on a honeycomb. Life would then be almost unbearable for they would burrow up my nostrils and into my ears and even attack my eyes. I might have felt more tolerant towards them had they been houseflies - we had plenty of those in Stanley Camp where I even swallowed one! It was quite accidental, of course. I was standing in the kitchen queue, chatting, when one flew into my mouth. In my surprise I drew a sharp breath which sucked the fly right down my gullet! But flies in Australia usually meant blowflies - ugly, filthy creatures that plagued the sheep as well as humans for they would settle deep within the animals' wool, inflicting horrible sores on their rumps.

I made friends with an irresistible day-old calf so that it ate out of my hand, sucked my fingers and followed me around like a dog; or I would just sit and watch the lambs as they frolicked and ran races as children do. Meanwhile large, black crows would sweep down to snatch at some unsuspecting prey and galahs, whose rose-pink breasts harmonising so elegantly with the pearly grey of their body plumage, provided added interest.

I began to enjoy my meals whereas previously I had merely played with the food placed before me - and eaten it out of politeness. I became interested not only in my surroundings but took part in the activities of the farm. Thelma initiated me into the art of butter

making and realizing that I would have to know how to use an iron, gave me handkerchiefs to press. She invited me to join her when she took morning tea over to the shearers so that I could see what shearing was about.

Norman began to take over my education. Each day I went around with him to inspect his crops. Together we watched the wheat turn from green to brown, from brown to harvest, and the millet shoot up after every shower of rain. I watched Albert on horseback rounding up cattle and wished I could join him so Thelma found an old pair of riding breeches which fitted me and I found that I could still keep my seat. Billy and I had taken lessons in 1935 in preparation for spending a summer in Tsingtau, a northern seaside resort, where we expected to be able to ride with Elizabeth. She had become quite a good horsewoman, having had lessons at a riding school for young people ever since she was three years of age.

The outings with Albert were both enjoyable and exhilarating, particularly when we spent an entire morning galloping around the property in search of a wily old ram who had escaped the shearers and, as a consequence, was very much in demand. Above all, I realized that I was beginning to regain control of body and mind.

The evenings were chilly and as we sat by the fire Norman would ask me questions about the East. He was particularly interested in China - its long history and its people. He planned to do an extended tour some day, he said.

If I had had difficulty in getting used to Thelma's voice, I often found Norman Jones' accent quite incomprehensible, and Thelma would have to interpret. Moreover his questions were sometimes fired at me without warning nor did they bear any relevance to what was being discussed. Doubtless they followed some line of his own thinking and one would have to be somewhat of a mind-reader to follow his thoughts.

There were times, though, when we sat reading or were silent with our own thoughts for where there is perfect understanding there is no call for speech. On occasion Norman would take us for drives in the moonlight when the brighter stars would struggle to shed a faint glow in the clear country atmosphere.

And so the days slipped by. All too soon we were into the third week of November. I mentioned that John's birthday was on the 28th and I had been thinking particularly of him. But as he was in boarding school I agreed there would be no sense in my rushing

back to Melbourne. It would be far better, Thelma suggested, that I send him a birthday cake which he could share with his friends - whereupon she immediately set to to make one. She had in mind a fruit cake and I had to help her bake it, she said. I am afraid the only contribution I made was to sift the flour under direction and to throw in a handful of dried fruit. The cake was ready and despatched on the same day.

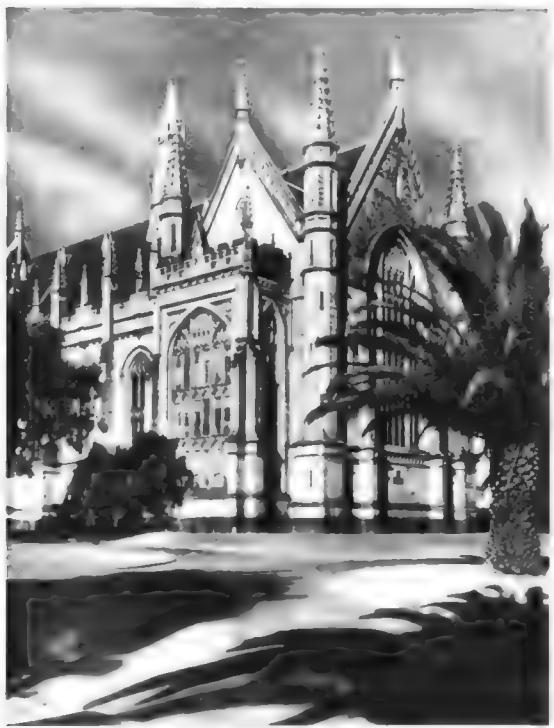
We spent a morning in Benalla where Thelma helped me choose a light grey frock and a navy blue cotton pinafore to wear over blouses which Thelma said I would find useful for the office. Also, because of Melbourne's changeable weather she told me that I should always wear a light wool singlet next to the skin. What a wonderful climate Melbourne must enjoy, I thought, for one to be able to wear a woollen singlet, however light, all the year round. Much to my chagrin I was to learn differently all too soon.

We had a late lunch after which we called on Thelma's friends, Mr and Mrs L. Ledger. Mr Ledger had served in both World Wars and was a member of the Legacy Club, that fine organization, so typically Australian, formed after the First World War, whose aim it was to extend a helping hand to the families of fallen comrades. This aim had been widened at the end of World War II to include the families of all allied nations living in Australia. Mr Ledger very kindly gave me the name and address of a fellow member - a Mr Bill (W.V.) Scott of Collins Street in Melbourne to whom, he said, I should turn in the event of need.

Sadly the day came for me to take leave of my kind friends. It was the last day of November, 1945, when Norman Jones packed us into their car. They had both tried to persuade me to stay longer for Thelma, being aware of my limitations, could foresee the difficulties which lay ahead. At the same time, I was so much better in health, and having regained a stone of my lost weight, I felt I could no longer shirk the burden of my responsibilities. Moreover I was anxious to put myself to the test. So, in spite of their persuasion and my own doubts and fears, I sailed from the harbour of the Joneses protective custody to face a future which was unknown and untried. That I came through those early years with some degree of mental stability is undoubtedly due to the foundation laid by the restorative power of this new country and the extraordinary kindness of its people. How hidden shoals and shallow sandbanks were navigated have no place in this chapter. Their story forms the basis of succeeding pages.

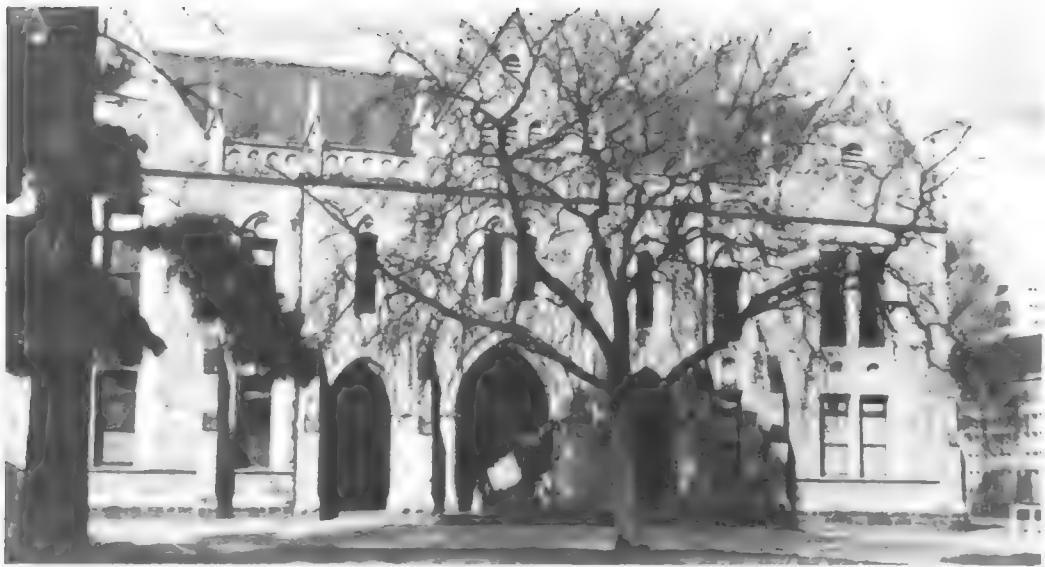


10. Flinders Street Railway Station.



11. Wilson Hall, Melbourne University.

Melbourne in the 1940's  
Photographs by Jack Cato, FRPS, reproduced with permission.



12. *The Building.*  
Photograph by Jean Gittins.



13. *Professor Peter MacCallum, with Professor E.S.J. King (left) and Professor R.D. Wright (right).*

Department of Pathology, The University of Melbourne

## 6 THE FINGER OF FATE

On my return to Melbourne from Benalla, I was pleasantly surprised to find that Mr Adam had solved, at least temporarily, the pressing problem of my accommodation: he had arranged residence for me at Chalmers Hall in East Melbourne.

Chalmers Hall had occupied the premises of Scotch College after it moved out to Hawthorn in 1923. The old stone building, conveniently situated in Parliament Place, was within walking distance, across parkland, of PLC so that I was immediately set in close proximity to Elizabeth. A short walk in the opposite direction brought me to a tram stop where a twopenny ride would take me into the heart of the city. A change of trams opposite the Town Hall and ten minutes later I would be at the Swanston Street entrance to the University of Melbourne.

There was just one minor problem, Mr Adam said: the difficulty lay in my age. Chalmers Hall was intended as a home for country girls between the ages of 18 and 25 years working in the city, 'and although,' he added with a smile, 'you could doubtless pass as aged 25, you could hardly account for a daughter of 15 years.'

In order to overcome this slight difficulty, he went on to say, 'I have arranged for you to be admitted as a staff member by undertaking, on your behalf, a light duty. You will be required to stay in the office three nights a week and to lock the front door at 11 p.m. As you will not have made too many friends since your arrival in Melbourne, I am sure this will not prove of great inconvenience to you. I would therefore suggest that you give it a trial for several weeks and see how you manage.'

I was naturally most grateful for his suggestion and was only too happy to comply. And so Mrs Jones, who had waited for me whilst I slipped in to see Mr Adam at his office, took me straight on to Chalmers Hall.

After registering I was shown into a small room, simply furnished and spotlessly clean. A window looked out on to the Fitzroy Gardens where shapely elm trees, heavy with leaf, shaded the afternoon sun. The sound of traffic gave way to the chirping of young birds anxious for their morsels of food brought to them by busy parents - I could be miles away from the city and yet I was in the heart of it. Yes, I liked the feel of the place. I would be more than comfortable here.

There was a small notice on the wall to say that meals were served in the dining hall: breakfast from 8.00 to 8.30 a.m., a cut lunch was provided during the week with a light meal on Saturdays. A hot dinner was served from 6.30 to 7.30 p.m. Sunday dinner was at mid-day. The room would be serviced.

As for the staff duty which went with the privilege of living in Chalmers Hall, I found that I was to sit in the office from 8 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I had to manage the telephone switchboard, take messages, check the names of the girls as they came in at night and, finally, to lock up at 11 p.m. These duties in themselves did not appear to be onerous although I was to find that, at the end of a long day at the office, they proved quite taxing.

As soon as I was settled I lost no time in getting into touch with Peggy Wardell. It had been arranged that I should work in her office until a decision was reached as to which department I was to go. I had a feeling that the Registrar favoured the Department of Pathology.

It was, however, a busy time for Peggy and her staff because the matriculation examination results were about to be published so I was able to be of some assistance. During the lunch hour we would have a quick cup of tea with our sandwiches and then walk over to Carlton where Peggy introduced me to the stores from which, she said, I would have to make my purchases when I had my own home. Most of these were in Lygon Street - King and Godfrey, the grocer, then the butcher, where the sight and smell of raw meat always made me feel squeamish, the greengrocer and a chemist. The Carlton Post Office was around the corner in Elgin Street and next to that was Mr Markov's Pharmacy which after forty years still supplies all my pharmaceutical needs.

We made an appointment to see Professor MacCallum, and Peggy walked me over to the old stone Gothic styled building we had passed each day on our way to Carlton. As we opened the heavy wooden door the acrid smell of formalin was quite overpowering although, once inside, it was soon dispelled. A long passage, decorated with framed photographs on both sides, ended at double glass doors leading into "The Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Pathology" but, about fifteen feet before reaching these doors, we turned into a room on the right in a corner of which was a small partitioned area with a sliding window. Peggy tapped on the window. It slid upwards and a voice answered: 'Yes?' Greetings were hastily exchanged and I was ushered into Professor

MacCallum's office.

It was a large room, lit by high sash-windows on two sides. Heavy wooden benches were built in on three sides, with a microscope cabinet in the corner facing me. Two of the benches were littered with stacks of untidy files and a built-in bookcase reaching almost to the ceiling stood on top of the third bench. Beneath the benches were drawers and under the one with the bookcase were cupboards as well. To my right was a doorway leading to the outside passage, and, next to me, on my left, stood a small bookcase. Finally, in the corner diagonally opposite the microscope cabinet, I noticed a small, old fashioned marble-topped hand basin under which was a built-in cupboard to hide the plumbing. It was placed next to a small gas heater, a twin of one I had seen in the outer room which I was to learn was known as the South Laboratory.

A brown linoleum covered both the Professor's office and that of Miss Davies but the laboratory floor was of rough unpolished wood, the blemishes of which showed starkly in the light of the huge plate glass windows.

A low bench was set beneath the windows. The only furniture was a long table of unusual height with a high stool nearby. On the table was an old typewriter, obviously set in readiness for a potential Assistant Secretary.

Professor MacCallum came from behind his desk in the middle of the room to greet me. He was rather stocky in build but moved with the grace and ease of an athlete. He had white hair and kindly blue eyes; in manner and in speech, he was graciously courteous; one could not help but like him.

The interview lasted only a few minutes. Professor MacCallum asked one or two casual questions quite unrelated to pathology or indeed as far as I can remember to anything in particular, then Miss Davies took over.

The Secretary's office was small, dark and dreary for, despite the large plate windows in the laboratory, very little natural light penetrated the glass-topped wooden partition around Miss Davies' sanctum. This was because the glass had been painted over to give the room extra privacy. The small electric globe in the pendant light fitting did little to dispel the gloom.

Miss Davies entered details of my age, address, education and family in a black exercise book labelled "Interviews" and I was then taken to see the Museum of which she seemed inordinately proud.

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Like her office, I found the Museum dark and dreary in spite of an open gallery which was designed to allow of natural lighting from a ceiling fitted with glass skylights. The large display cases built of imported yellow pine with glass doors were loaded with specimens of all descriptions - 12,000 of them, Miss Davies said, 'and not one shows a normal condition!' She knew, she said, because she had typed all the labels. 'But,' she continued, 'with the damage done by silverfish and the spillage of the formalin solution in which the specimens have to be stored, it will be one of your jobs to type new labels before long!' Miss Davies obviously took it for granted that I would accept the position as her assistant! Little did she know of what went through my mind!

I did accept it, though, after a good deal of hesitation. When we became better acquainted, Miss Davies confided to me how very exhausted she had been, and yet she could see no way of getting out because she had decided that no one could possibly take her place. 'And even if someone were to come along and was found to be suitable, it would take at least two years for her to be trained.' Moreover she and the Professor were planning to be married but, without a suitable replacement, that would have been out of the question.

'And then, out of the blue you turned up - it had to be the Finger of Fate!' Miss Davies decided.

I never disclosed the fact that it was not the Finger of Fate but that of the Registrar, Mr John Foster, which pointed the way!

I had completed my twenty-fourth year when, as Administrative Secretary of the Department, I retired at the end of 1969.

It took me no longer than seven minutes to reach the haven of Peggy Wardell's office and in that time Professor MacCallum had telephoned the Registrar to say that he wanted me to join his department *immediately*. Naturally this came as something of a shock to me; but I was to learn that although it was in Professor MacCallum's nature to be cautious, when he felt strongly enough about anything, he did not hesitate to get it done.

I explained to Mr Foster that I had planned to take the children away during their Christmas holidays and, in fact, Mr Adam had made a booking for us to spend a fortnight in Mortington at the end of January. With holiday accommodation as difficult as it was at that time, I could hardly ask Mr Adam to change the booking, or to cancel it, which would disappoint the children.

The reply came back: Professor MacCallum still wanted me as soon as possible but it would be on the understanding that I could take leave of absence, without pay, whenever it suited me to take the children away. And so I found myself in the Pathology Department on a temporary basis for the last fortnight of December (1945) - with the prospect of a full-time appointment as a Typist at a salary of four pounds fourteen shillings a week from January 2nd, 1946, and the promise of an annual increment of one pound a week until or unless reclassified. I recall asking Peggy if that was a livable wage? Her reply indicated that, as I had the two children, I would need to be extremely careful.

Professor MacCallum undertook to have the office accommodation improved. This was not to be put into effect until almost four years later and then only after I had had the audacity to ask Mr Gray, the Clerk of Works, when we might expect these improvements. His impatient reply brought on a spontaneous flood of tears which so alarmed him that in no time at all linoleum covered the bare floor boards and huge gray rats no longer peeped out of their holes on dark winter evenings. This was mainly to see if the coast was clear for them to venture out to scavenge in the waste paper baskets for half-eaten sandwiches left by the juniors. I was never required, though, to sit on a stool at the high table which is what my predecessor had to do - a desk and chair having been requisitioned for my use. The typewriter was a very old model Underwood and I soon asked for permission to bring in my own Royal which I

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had taken with me to the University on the morning that hostilities broke out and, before going into internment camp, had left at the Italian Convent for safe-keeping.

An appointment as Typist was somewhat of a come-down after the elevated position of Secretary of the Faculty of Medicine, albeit of a lesser institution; but there was not a great deal of difference in the remuneration offered as the scale of pre-war salaries in the University of Hong Kong was not over-generous although, at that time, I was earning only "pin money" instead of having to support myself and the children on what the University of Melbourne paid me.

Miss Davies lost no time in telling me what an honour it was for me to be a member of the Pathology Department of the University of Melbourne. Indeed, when the part-time teaching staff returned after the summer vacation one of them, a specialist physician from Collins Street, confided to me that it was of no consequence to the general public for a physician to have rooms in Collins Street, and be on the honorary staff of the Royal Melbourne Hospital; but if he could claim even a part-time appointment in the Pathology Department of the University of Melbourne, it would mean that he had reached the pinnacle of his career.

The reason for this lay in the reputation of one man.

Peter (later Sir Peter) MacCallum, M.C., was born in Glasgow, educated (M.A., M.Sc.) in New Zealand after which he added a medical qualification from Edinburgh University. He had first occupied the Chair of Pathology in the University of Melbourne in 1925. When I joined the Department twenty years later he had become the acknowledged doyen of pathologists in Australia. He was as well Chairman of the Professorial Board, Chairman of the Council of the Australian College of Dentistry, President of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, Chairman of the newly formed Australian National Research Council, Consultant Pathologist to the Australian Army and lately Chairman of the Victorian Regional Committee for Post-War Reconstruction which had been set up to rehabilitate ex-service personnel. This proved to be an overwhelming task, for Professor MacCallum was nothing if not conscientious. He found it necessary to spend many hours each day interviewing and assessing every single applicant 'from medical students to Bible students and jazz band conductors' - to use his own words - with Miss Davies typing

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out the results. 'We worked from 9 a.m. till 11 and 12 o'clock at night for months, including weekends. . .' It was in inadequate recognition by the Rehabilitation Department of his contribution to this project that he was granted the miserly privilege of extra secretarial assistance, which gave rise to the position now offered to me.

Within University circles, however, it was agreed that Professor MacCallum was not a good lecturer. The classical presentation of his material coupled with a dry Scottish humour soared above the heads of his young Australian audience. It was further revealed that the only way to benefit from his lectures was to take down every word and to study later what had been written. A senior physician confessed he had done just that. He never consulted a textbook, he added. He gained high honours at the annual examination.

My attention was once drawn to a paragraph of some 10-12 lines in length published in the students' newspaper "Farrago". It was titled "Puzzle: Find the Verb". I recognized it immediately to be a verbatim quote from one of the Professor's series of lectures on General Pathology which he invariably delivered himself during the preliminary term in November. Sure enough, there was not a single verb to be found in the paragraph!

Nor could it be said that he was popular with the students. His natural reserve coupled with a conservative outlook proved a barrier against intimacy. Some thought him aloof, others put it down to shyness; and yet his genuine understanding of another's problems added to an innate kindness of heart often won him regard and warm esteem. Moreover as Head of a paraclinical department in the days before the clinical chairs were established young graduates competed for the privilege of working under him. Above all, he had that rare capacity for attracting enthusiasts and drawing out the best in them, thereby establishing the School of Pathology as a nursery in which aspirants to the wider spheres of clinical medicine and surgery learnt the science of disease.

Although his age and his many commitments did not allow Professor MacCallum to indulge actively in the sporting field he maintained an interest and enthusiasm for all its activities. A double blue (Athletics and Rugby) of the Universities of New Zealand and Edinburgh, he accepted in Melbourne the Presidency of the Sports Union Council and was as well Chairman of the Recreation Grounds Committee. In spite of the ever increasing calls on his time he

never even considered putting aside these relatively minor commitments; nor would he have acquiesced had it been suggested that he should do so.

Professor MacCallum had in 1925 inherited a tired department. His predecessor, Sir Harry Allen, had been ill long before death released him from an office which he had created, nurtured and occupied for a period of almost forty years. Meanwhile, student numbers, partly due to the return of ex-servicemen, had increased out of all proportion to the small staff.

Exceptional circumstances call for exceptional skills and the Melbourne School was fortunate in finding in the newcomer the very qualities needed to meet the situation. Peter MacCallum began quietly. He selected for his inaugural lecture a series of talks on General Pathology. These were given in the evening to a critical audience of University authorities, qualified members of the profession, departmental staffs as well as students, and the audience passed favourable judgment. Within the Department young enthusiasts flocked to his side. A new era had begun.

Frank Apperly had been Senior Lecturer since 1920 and had acted as Department Head during Allen's illness. With the arrival of the new professor and his encouragement of experimental work, Apperly now found more time to devote to his investigations into the mechanism and complications of gastric function. The many papers resultant upon these investigations published both in Australia and overseas were doubtless a factor in Dr Apperly's appointment in 1932 to the Chair of Pathology at the Medical School in Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A.

Apperly was not the only one to bring credit to the Department. Closely following him in the 1930s were R.A. Willis, whose work on tumours and metastatic conditions earned him world renown; E.S.J. King, triple winner of the coveted Jacksonian Prize of the Royal College of Surgeons of England; and R.D. Wright, perhaps the most brilliant of them all. All were to become professors in their own right but, before doing so, they needed the guiding hand of a born leader; in experimental work in particular the novice is often faced with the problems and interpretations which, without help, so often confuse or mislead. In spite of commitments within the University and outside of it, Peter MacCallum was always at hand when his staff needed him - to quote his own words: 'King, Wright and many others saw to it that I did not sleep on the job!'

Dr Apperly left an invaluable legacy to the Department in the

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form of a Secretary, Miss Davies. Way back in 1929 he had met her at the Alfred Hospital where she was undertaking preliminary nursing training. Recognizing her potential, he managed to interest her instead in the possibility of secretarial work in the Department. The result was that as soon as Professor MacCallum was able to obtain the necessary permission Frieda Davies joined the staff. With this relatively junior appointment in the Pathology Department the system of departmental secretaries throughout the University was established; no department before this had had a secretary; before long almost every department could boast of one.

Meanwhile Miss Davies had mastered the use of a typewriter in no time at all and, coupling this with a natural instinct for order, and an ability to create it out of chaos, she had taken over sufficiently to become, again quoting Professor MacCallum, "a mother to the Department".

I was taken on a conducted tour. We called first at the laboratory next door where I was introduced to Mr Guthrie, the red-headed Senior Technician, whose title was later elevated to that of Senior Technical Officer, and ultimately to Laboratory Manager.

Originally from Dundee, James Guthrie had served in the Royal Navy during the First World War. After his discharge he decided to settle in Australia and in 1924 joined the Bacteriology Department as a technical assistant. When Professor MacCallum lost his senior technician in a traffic accident in the city in 1929, he had no hesitation in offering the position to a fellow Scot who had had five years experience of technical procedures in the related department next door.

When I came into the picture in 1945 Mr Guthrie had been in the Department, like Miss Davies, for 17 years. Coupling his genial personality and innate helpfulness with her intelligence and efficiency, the two formed a formidable alliance which created a strong impression on generations of students. Half a century later senior members of the medical profession still look back with nostalgia to memories of their year spent in the Pathology Department. As Professor MacCallum became more and more involved in extra-departmental affairs these two assumed progressively greater responsibility in domestic matters.

Mr Guthrie extended a welcoming hand which I accepted in gratitude and at once felt more at home. Throughout the years

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that we worked together, until the tragic illness which took his life, we were to remain friends and allies. In all our dealings both had but one aim - the welfare of the Department. His passing in 1961 left a personal gap which was not filled for many years.

We crossed the passage to enter the "Centre Lab". This was a large room occupying the central portion of the ground floor of the building. The same rough grey unpolished wood covered the floor; the acrid smell of formalin was overpowering - the departmental budget did not in those days extend to the luxury of exhaust fans and, in any case, workers became accustomed to the fumes and after a while no longer felt discomfort.

A short high bench stood at my left; behind this one of Mr Guthrie's assistants, Ian Hines, stood turning a piece of equipment (I was told it was a microtome). Beside the microtome was a water-bath which was filled with thermostatically controlled warm water. It was quite fascinating to watch the almost transparently thin ribbon of waxy substance come out of the microtome as Ian turned the handle and, with a pair of small forceps in his left hand, guided the ribbon into the water-bath.

A doorway at the end of the bench led us into the preparation room. Here Mr Guthrie's other assistant, Keith Jones, was busy attending to operative and autopsy specimens just arrived from the hospitals. Against the far wall of the room were two large lead-lined sinks in which the specimens were washed prior to mounting into glass containers for future display in the museum. I later learned that teacups and saucers from the staff room were washed in these same sinks.

A row of windows formed the opposite wall of the Lab. Beneath the windows was a long low bench, in the centre of which was a basin. Two lads sitting on stools at the bench were, according to Frieda, making preliminary preparations on the small pieces of tissue sent in by local medical practitioners and country hospitals for subsequent microscopic examination and report by Professor MacCallum.

I was to learn later of all the various processes through which these bits of tissue had to be put and was, as a consequence, better able to appreciate the tremendous time and labour saving value of the *Histokine*, an automatic tissue processing machine, when one was purchased from the firm of Thomas Optical & Scientific Instruments Co. Ltd. some six or seven years later.

We had a few words with Keith and Ian. Ian Hines was soon to

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move on to join Dr Merrilees in Embryology in the School of Anatomy and Histology. His place was later filled in 1952 by Tom Cuthbertson who stayed with us for six years until he left to work for Dr Ian Stahle, one of our part-time staff, before transferring in 1962 to the new medical department of Monash University where he is Laboratory Manager in the Medical School to this day.

Keith Jones stayed with us until 1964 when he, too, joined Monash where he remains Curator of its anatomy museum.

Of the two lads, John Baird was not really interested in laboratory work and left shortly after I joined the Department. George Pearson, however, was a likeable youngster and full of fun. He stayed with us for some time. Thirty years later I heard that he had become Mayor of Frankston, one of Melbourne's larger bayside suburbs.

We went on past the dark room, situated next to the preparation room, but did not intrude. At this end of the Centre Lab was a long table loaded with glass jars ready for specimens to be mounted for eventual display in the Museum.

And so on through the doorway opposite and into the north passage on the other side of the Centre Lab. At the end of this passage, in the same position as the Museum, was the Medical Library. Brief greetings were exchanged with the Librarian, Miss Raff, before we pressed on past the Stewart Lecturer's room and Staff Room, to call on the Senior Lecturer, Dr Lowe.

Dr Thomas Edward Lowe, D.Sc., M.D., was the son of Mr Justice Lowe, Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. He had held the rank of Major in the A.I.F. but had recently been invalided home where, besides holding a Senior Lecturship in Pathology, he also commanded the medical wing of the Melbourne University Rifles. In appearance Dr Lowe was tall and slim and, to me, he seemed somewhat aloof; but I later found he had quite a sense of humour. I remember typing his home address once as "22 Tintan Avenue" instead of "Tintern Avenue", at which he smilingly commented: 'We are not in China now, you know.'

Dr Lowe welcomed me graciously, saying he hoped I would be happy living so far from home. Then, as it was time for morning tea, he suggested that we adjourn to the Staff Room where Mrs Delaney, the newly appointed cleaner, had made a pot of weak tea and laid out a few cups and saucers. There was a little milk in a jug and very little sugar - both tea and sugar being at that time rationed.

Frieda took a cup across to Professor MacCallum and I learned from Dr Lowe that besides him, we had a staff establishment of two lecturers. We would soon be joined by Dr Ian Heinz who had been a prisoner-of-war in Changi. Dr Allan Pound was still in the Army and would not be discharged until August. The Hospital Pathologists worked in with us and, when term resumed after the vacation in March, we would be joined by a number of part-time tutors and demonstrators.

After Frieda had had a cup of tea we continued on our tour of the Department: I hadn't seen the upstairs, she said. So we returned via the Centre Lab into the Museum where just inside the double door was a stairway leading to the gallery. Around the gallery were several tables and spare desks. Against the walls hung old photographs of pathological conditions beneath which were low cases displaying stones, small bones, and other items.

Half a dozen steps led us into the classroom which was situated over the offices. Here on several long benches, Frieda said, was where students studied their microscope slides - the south light coming from the large windows being the best for this purpose.

A door from the classroom led into the lecture theatre which stood over the Centre Lab. This had been built for a maximum of eighty students but with additional forms and stools and with some students sitting on the steps leading up to the raised back of the theatre, it now accommodated over two hundred.

There were laboratories over the north rooms on the ground floor of the building but, because of the reduced numbers of students and staff during the War, these had been lent to the growing Department of Biochemistry, as had the little workshop built in the back yard attached to the far corner of the Museum. 'All these will have to be returned to us and the sooner the better,' Frieda said positively.

By this time it was almost the lunch hour and I mentioned to Frieda that I was to meet Peggy on the lawn outside. 'But, first, I should like to have a wash,' I ventured timidly, not having seen any sign even of toilet facilities on our tour. Frieda led me back down the stairs. 'I must just show you the special specimens we inherited from Dr Mollison, the Coroner's Pathologist,' she said, and we went down to the far end of the Museum where, in a low case in the centre, a variety of forensic items was displayed. Most interesting of these were relics from the mysterious case of the "Pyjama Girl" whose charred body was found lying in a culvert by

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the roadside near Albury. Her murderer, who turned out to have been her husband, was later apprehended through the identification of her teeth by an alert dentist.\*

Returning to the office to pick up a key, we continued on our way to the toilets. We crossed the back yard and then a small path before arriving at the basement of the Department of Bacteriology. Entering an open doorway we came to a row of water closets, one of which was locked. There was a small hand basin but neither soap nor towel. Primitive though these facilities were, they served the purpose and I used them for almost 25 years. It was not too bad during the summer months but in winter the dark evenings made the going a little difficult.

When I met Peggy for lunch on that eventful day and told her all I had seen, she warned me: 'Now don't you let that department swallow you as it did Frieda. I can see that I shall have to keep more than an eye on you!' That she was not entirely successful is shown by the comment made by a friend some years later - she observed that it was obvious to her that the Department was of primary importance in my life; Hong Kong came second; and the children rated a very poor third! In looking back, I feel that although work in the Department was certainly demanding and the people in Hong Kong were ever in my thoughts, the statement was not altogether a true assessment, for I was perhaps over-concerned with bringing up the children.

\*Coleman, R., *The Pyjama Girl*, Hawthorn Press, Melbourne (1978) -  
The body was found on 1 September 1934.

## 8 THE STRUGGLE TO LIVE

I was unfortunate enough to have been born without any sense of direction with the result that when I came to a corner, I never knew whether to turn to the left or to the right or, indeed, to continue straight ahead. This did not matter much in Hong Kong; it was a small town in those days and, besides, I had been born into it. In a large city like Melbourne, though, it mattered a great deal; all its streets were wide and straight and, as far as I could see, other than the fact that some had tram lines and some did not, there were few identifying features in them - I never knew which street I was in and I continually became lost.

Elizabeth drew me a plan of the city. 'It is so simple, Mother - Melbourne is so well laid out. Here are the streets going north to south' she said, pointing to the plan: 'King, William, Queen, Elizabeth, etc. They are named after Kings and Queens of England. You ought to find them easy to remember. Then there are the streets which cross them' she continued. 'Here is Flinders Street, immediately after crossing the River on Princes Bridge, then Little Flinders, Collins and Little Collins, Bourke and Little Bourke and so on. You will soon learn to know them.'

But I didn't learn - not until years later. John came up with a suggestion to help me: 'Each time you want to turn right, Mother, you just turn the other way and you will probably be right.' Then Thelma Jones added hers: 'Look out for the Shrine, Jean. You can see it from all over the city. Just remember that it is south of the River, whereas the city is to the north. Once you locate it you should be able to get your bearings.'

Nothing helped and I continued to lose my way. I remember standing at street corners wondering which corner it was - few had the luxury of marked street names - turning Elizabeth's plan this way and that and then, having to ask some kind-looking police officer where I was - a humiliating experience in a city that was "so well laid out."

To comfort myself I decided that it was because I had come from the northern hemisphere and was merely disorientated; once I became accustomed to "standing on my head," things would be different. Whilst it lasted, though, the experience was not pleasant, especially as it was not only in the city; the situation was just as bad in the suburbs where the buildings and street corners

all seemed alike. I never knew whether I was in Kew or in Collingwood, in Camberwell or in Auburn.

I remember once early on when on my way "home" to Clucas's, I left the tram as usual at the stop after the corner of St Mark's Church in Burke Road, Camberwell. I should have turned left into Victoria Road a few steps further on. Instead of which I crossed the tram lines and turned right into Victoria Road in Auburn, a suburb which is now known as East Hawthorn. I noticed in passing that the first house I passed was No.160, which should have warned me. Not giving it any thought, I pressed on.

Mr Clucas's house seemed much farther than usual and I decided that this was because I felt particularly weary on that day. My feet dragged; but what was worse was the fact that when I arrived at what should have been No.18, I found it to be a vacant lot!

I asked a passer-by if he knew where No.18 had got to? He paused and then, as if a thought had suddenly struck him, said: 'Wait a minute, did you want Victoria Road, Auburn, or Victoria Road, Camberwell? If it is Camberwell you want, I am afraid you will have to get right to the top of this road and cross the tram lines before you reach Camberwell. I hope you are not as tired as you look, lady. You have a long way to go!'

When I explained my lateness, Mr Clucas remarked that I should have been able to distinguish between the standard of housing between the two suburbs.

I must have walked many an unnecessary mile in those days and my feet were so sore. Wide-fitting "Joyce" shoes, with their thick wedged heels were not the most comfortable wear for my "ugly English feet", as Grace used to describe them, and having been around bare-footed in internment camp did not help; but imported shoes with fractional fittings were just not available in Melbourne in those days even were I able to afford them. Nor could I walk around the streets bare-footed.

Shopping in the city was a nightmare, especially during the lunch hour. At times, though, it was a necessity. With the changeable weather I soon developed a nasty cold which no number of asprins or egg-flips as prescribed and prepared by Frieda did much to help. As a matter of fact both Dr Lowe and I had had one and sometimes two egg-flips every day because he was not recovering as well as he might and I, though seemingly well, was still so very thin. My weight was checked each week and entered at the

back of Frieda's "Interviews" book which made me feel more like one of their experimental guinea-pigs than a typist!

I ran out of handkerchiefs, of course, and rushed down to Myer's, one day, to pick up a box of Kleenex. Timidly I approached the crowded counter and, more timidly still, asked for a box of Kleenex.

'What's that yer want?'

'May I have a box of Kleenex, please?' I repeated.

I knew I wasn't speaking clearly but one can hardly do so with a heavy cold. When she still looked nonplussed, I added: 'You know, a box of face tissues.'

'Good heavens, Ma'am. Don't yer know we've had a war on?'

I turned away empty-handed and almost blinded with tears. The short walk to the tram stop in Swanston Street helped restore my composure but the No.15 tram was unusually crowded and strap-hanging was the only alternative to waiting twenty minutes for the next one. The conductor struggled to collect the fares, stepping on my toes as he pushed and squeezed between passengers.

At my sudden yelp of pain he deliberately looked down and, after staring at my feet for a moment, observed: 'It's a pity some people have such big feet.' It was certainly not my lucky day, I decided.

However, as we carried on towards the City Baths a gentleman, who had been reading his "Herald", slowly folded it and getting up to leave the tram said: 'There you are, Miss, you can have *my* seat!' The tears streamed down my cheeks - sympathy was the last thing I needed at that time.

When I returned to the Department, Mr Guthrie came in with a tray of slides for the Professor and Frieda decided that I had better begin taking dictation. Reports, she said, had to be sent out to the various doctors and country hospitals that evening.

I sat on a stool by the bench with notebook and pencil as Professor MacCallum muttered into his microscope. He did not speak fast but Greek or even Latin could not have been more incomprehensible to me. Moreover I was nervous and the terminology unfamiliar - I did not know, nor could I have guessed, that there was a certain general standard in style in which reports were made, nor that much of the terminology was constantly to be repeated - I did not even know the meaning of words like macroscopic and microscopic - they sounded alike to a novice.

Above all, if I so much as asked him to repeat a word - or a phrase - he would have to begin again at the beginning, and repeat what he had said all over again!

It was all most depressing; and I could not but feel that, during the several days that I had been with her, had Frieda spent less time in loading me with details of time-tables and lists of lectures and tutorials, things of which I had at least some knowledge, and more about the technical aspects of the work, I might have been less confused. As it was I had to grope my way forward in almost total darkness.

The school year in Australia ends in December and, before breaking up for the long summer holidays most schools hold their Speech Days or Prize Givings. Mary King had come down from Hong Kong to be with her daughters. We had been out with them before this, having had lunch on a Saturday at a city restaurant where, Elizabeth said, "Auntie" had taken them for an occasional treat. After the lunch the five children had taken me to visit the Shrine of Remembrance in St Kilda Road.

Mary King expressed a desire to attend John's Prize Day. Gordon King had told me that, not having had a son of her own, Mary had always taken to John as though he had been hers as well as mine - after all, she had mothered him for over four years. We met at the Princes Bridge tram terminus in the city and together went out to St Mark's Church in Camberwell where the ceremony was to be held.

John had topped his year. His name was called for several prizes, a fact that was most pleasing to us - but both Mary and I noticed that he seemed not to hear and each time his friends had to nudge him to go up for the prize. This caused us much concern but when I mentioned it to the Matron and her assistant, they said they had noticed nothing except that John had a heavy cold.

I took him up to the Department the following morning and Professor MacCallum, at his own suggestion, telephoned Mr George Swinburne, an ear, nose and throat specialist, to give us an early appointment.

Mr Swinburne gave John a thorough examination and then sat at his microscope cabinet. I can still see him, head in hands, muttering to himself: 'I can't believe it! I just can't believe it!'

'What can't you believe, Mr Swinburne?' I asked.

'Well, Mrs Gittins, John is just ten years old, is he not? Is there any deafness in your family?' he asked.

'My father is deaf', I replied, 'but he is over 80 years old, so one might expect it.'

'What about your husband's family?'

'My husband was deaf only when he chose not to hear. I can't think of anyone else.'

'Did he (your husband) have any ear trouble of any sort?' Mr Swinburne pursued.

I told him that Billy had had an accident early in 1941. He had foolishly put a match to a drum of hydrogen from which he was filling balloons for Elizabeth's birthday party. I had gone into the room a minute before he did this - to see what they were up to, and had only just pulled Elizabeth away when the drum blew up with a tremendous explosion. Billy fell to the floor and then complained of severe pain in his ear. I treated him for shock and telephoned the doctor.

It seemed that nothing could be done that night but he was under treatment by a specialist until war broke out in December. I believe he had ear trouble during all the years that he was a prisoner-of-war in Japan. I never saw him again except for a few minutes across the barbed wire fence before I myself went into internment.

Mr Swinburne explained that John's present trouble would soon clear but he would have to go into hospital for several days. He had what was known as otitis media which simply meant inflammation of the middle ear. The treatment involved a slight operation to clear the ear passage and reduce the inflammation. However, the examination had shown early signs of otosclerosis, a hereditary disease. 'If this is confirmed', Mr Swinburne said, 'John will most likely be completely deaf by the time he is in his early teens. I should like to see him in six months' time, that is, after his present trouble has blown over.'

Continuing, Mr Swinburne said: 'In the meantime, would you write to your husband's doctor in Hong Kong to ask him for details, if he still has them after the war and Japanese occupation, of your husband's trouble? And I will make arrangements for John to go into St George's Hospital in Kew as soon as possible.'

Dr Douglas Laing, an ear, nose and throat specialist in Hong Kong, was an old friend and his reply was soon received: he was very sorry to have to tell me that Billy definitely had symptoms of otosclerosis.

As soon as I returned to the Department I went into Professor

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MacCallum's room, reached for his book "Diseases of the Ear, Nose and Throat" and read about otosclerosis. George Swinburne's prognosis was correct in every detail.

John was soon out of hospital and then came our first Christmas together for five years. We attended divine service at St Paul's Cathedral before having Christmas dinner with Mr and Mrs Adam and family in Kew, followed by Christmas tea in the evening with the Webbs in Darcombe Avenue, Deepdene. Our Australian friends saw to it that the bereaved family from Hong Kong did not spend Christmas alone.

I might add here that John's hearing did degenerate as Mr Swinburne had predicted but, with advances in medical skill and technology, his otherwise grave handicap is now little more than a slight inconvenience.

## 9 A TIME FOR REFLECTION

Late January came and, at last, we left for our long awaited holiday at Mornington. Mr Adam had booked us into a boarding house fairly close to the beach. The large-sized room was clean and the beds fairly comfortable, the food wholesome and adequate. The only discomfort we suffered was from flies during the day and mosquitoes at night. Never in all my travels to China and Europe had I met the like. We borrowed a fly spray from the manageress, closed door and windows and sprayed the room each night before going to bed. A few minutes after the room was sprayed, the bedclothes would be littered with dead mosquitoes.

We met Professor (later Sir Lindsay) Ride from Hong Kong University. He had been an Australian Rhodes Scholar who was appointed to the Chair of Physiology in Hong Kong in the mid 1930s. He had commanded the Field Ambulance Unit of the HKVDC, was one of the first to escape from the prison camp at Shumshui po after our surrender and, after organizing Hong Kong's resistance group\* in China, had been among the first to re-enter Hong Kong at the end of the War. I had met him briefly before leaving. He was now visiting his family in Mornington.

Another familiar face was that of Mr Foster, the Registrar of Melbourne University. He was interested to know how I was getting on at Pathology. I am afraid I was not terribly enthusiastic, particularly about Frieda. Mr Foster understood and slyly hinted that he gathered that Miss Davies had not been at all well and as soon as she felt that the Department could be left to me, she would retire. He personally hoped that I would feel better after my holiday.

I never knew if the children enjoyed the holiday, but they were very good. Elizabeth helped me each morning to wash and press our few clothes. I tried to persuade John to go down to the beach and perhaps make friends with the other boys but he preferred just to stay with us. Being a bayside beach, the sand was not as fine as in beaches I was accustomed to in Hong Kong but we made as much use of it as we possibly could.

I had expected that so long as we were together, we could pick up the threads of our former life and carry on - but we had been parted for too long for this to happen. Perhaps we were all a little too shy to demonstrate our feelings. I knew little, too, of their

interests and lacked the ability to find out without seeming to intrude.

Above all, I was haunted by thoughts of the future: how on earth were we to manage, without home or money? I knew I had 3,000 Australian pounds in the bank but Mr Adam had impressed upon me not to fritter that money away. I had to be extremely careful of how I spent each penny, he said.

There was at least some distraction during the day but, night after night, I lay awake worrying about the future. I was glad when the holiday came to an end.

On our return to Melbourne, John was invited to go away with the Asches. Mary Asche was Mr Adam's sister. They had a holiday house up in the hills at Belgrave where I had spent a week-end when I first arrived. Elizabeth returned to Clucas's at Camberwell.

It was Frieda's turn to have a holiday. She had worked single-handed over the past month and, even after I joined, she had had to spend a good deal of time showing me all that she considered I should know. And now that she thought I could safely be trusted to carry on alone, she decided to have a brief rest before the March term began.

According to the medical curriculum of the mid-1940s, the fourth year began in early November with a short term of six weeks. The rest of the year consisted of an interim period of four weeks, after the Christmas vacation, to be followed by two terms of ten weeks each with a fortnight's break in between, extending until the middle of August. Examinations were held in September, with supplementaries - a second chance for border-line students - in October. This completed the year.

Pathology was the main subject taught during the fourth year, with three lectures, a two-hour practical class and two two-hour tutorials each week. These were all held in the forenoon. The rest of the morning was taken up by Bacteriology, Biochemistry and Pharmacy (*materia medica*) classes spread over the three terms.

The students, according to their performance at their examinations in Anatomy and Physiology, usually had their choice of clinical schools at the three teaching hospitals: the Royal Melbourne, the Alfred and St. Vincent's. Because of its wider facilities, the Royal Melbourne usually claimed the highest number, while many preferred the Alfred. For most students of the Roman Catholic faith St. Vincent's was usually their choice. Post-mortem

demonstrations were held at noon every day except on Wednesdays. In the afternoons students attended out-patient sessions.

By the middle of February the students were drifting back after their vacation but although autopsy demonstrations began immediately, other work did not resume until after the second week in March. As Frieda made preparations for her holiday she gave me detailed instructions as to all that I should know, and do, during her absence. Then, probably by way of encouragement, as she saw that I was getting hopelessly confused, she said: 'But I am sure you will be able to manage without any difficulty. In fact on my return you will probably tell me that I am no longer needed.'

'Don't you believe it,' I replied. 'You can have your old job back with pleasure. I am not staying!'

Frieda told me later that I had ruined her holiday before it had even begun!

Strangely enough, I felt more at home after I was left on my own. I began to take an interest in what was going on around me and Professor MacCallum went out of his way to explain what pathology was all about. Dr Lowe, too, was kind and helpful and Mr Guthrie was always ready to give any assistance or advice.

Frieda must have told the Professor what I had said because on the evening before she was due to return Professor MacCallum called me into his room and asked me to sit down:

'I am glad to see you settling in so well,' he said. 'Tell me, now, how do you feel about the Department?'

'Well, Professor,' I began, 'I didn't think I would ever feel at home in this atmosphere. However, since I have been on my own, I seem to have got on much better.'

'I am very glad to hear that,' he said. Then without further preamble, he added: 'I want to take you into my confidence. I am going to ask Miss Davies to marry me and I would very much like you to take her place. Would you consider doing so?'

What could I do but to say that I would try. 'But,' I added, 'you are taking an awful risk.'

To say that I was surprised is to put it mildly - I was astounded. This was not because of his wishing to marry Frieda - it was obvious that he was entirely dependent on her, even a blind person could have seen that - but to take me, a comparative stranger, into his confidence in so important a matter, was quite beyond my comprehension. I was to learn, in time, that it was in Professor MacCallum's nature to form instant opinions of people he met. He

seemed to know instinctively when and in whom he could place his trust and, more important still, he knew how to draw the greatest response and loyalty from those with whom he was closely associated.

Thus was I inveigled into an association which was mainly satisfying, at times tantalizing, but always full of challenging interest, for almost a quarter of a century. Nor would I have had it otherwise.

Relieved of household duties at Chalmers Hall I was able to keep in close touch by letter with the family in Hong Kong. I had written also to Dr Riley, in the care of the Air Ministry in London. He was the medical officer who had attended Billy in Japan and from him I had received Billy's will and details of his long illness.

Here are some extracts from copies of letters to my sister's husband, "M.K." Lo, who was acting for me in Hong Kong:

"He (Dr Riley) remembers the case clearly and had known Billy well. It appears that Billy had suffered from general weakness due to dysentery and malnutrition early in 1944 but later in the year his health improved. They received a consignment of American Red Cross parcels, a large number of which were kept aside for distribution to the sick. These Dr Riley had administered personally and Billy had been given daily rations of milk, cheese, butter and meat. They also received American medical supplies which had helped considerably. But the winter had proved too much for him and in February, 1945, he developed pleurisy which turned to pneumonia, of which he died on March 5th."

In another letter I wrote: "I have received many letters from his friends. One who had been with him in 4th Battery, Hong Kong Volunteers, has told me of how Billy had been a 'tower of strength' during the fighting in trying to uphold the morale of his gun crew and how, long after the men had deserted, he had worked to keep the searchlights going. 'Throughout the blitz' he said, 'Bill was his usual placid self, and his fellow NCOs have nothing but the deepest admiration for him!' Others have written of his courage in the fight he had put up during his long illness in Japan; how they had cared for him; how he never lost heart. Contrary to what I had first heard, he had received several letters from Elizabeth and from me. He had been most anxious that I should know, when it was all over, how hard he had tried to live."

The sincerity of expression in this one I found particularly touching: "I didn't have the pleasure of knowing your Bill in peace

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time," he said, "but I was with him in Shamshui po Camp where I took to him right away and I think that he liked me too. Whenever we had a few minutes to spare we would sit outside and talk about you and the good times we would have when the war was over . . .

We were together in Japan. We had had a long and miserable trip with crowded conditions, bad food and foul weather. It lasted twenty days. He was run down when we left Hong Kong and should never have come away - but you know your Bill. He was ill for a long time after we arrived. There was a lack of medicine and drugs but with the arrival of Red Cross supplies from America he began to pick up. The death of Jimmy Jack in September affected him deeply but, by then, the war news was so good that he was greatly encouraged. He never gave up the struggle although the doctor said he didn't have a chance. We all expected him to pull through . . . Bill was a good friend to me and to many others in our camp, always wanting to share with us any little thing which he had. Perhaps this was a fault of his. I wish to God many more of us were like him."

It is heartrending to learn of all that he suffered and I cannot help thinking that, had he lost his life during the fighting, he would have been spared the long years of misery which internment imposed. Yet the knowledge that he had had the tender care of his friends and the special attention, which it was in Dr Riley's power to give him, was in itself a great comfort. The story of his quiet courage under the stress of war and of internment will always be an inspiration to me and an example to the children.

In yet another letter: "Seeing more of John lately has brought home to me the terrible loss that Billy's death will mean to him. Fortunately he is too young and does not remember enough to suffer the pain of bereavement but to lose, at his tender age, all that Billy would have given him is a situation too sad for words. I am thankful that he appears to have inherited that natural charm of disposition and spirit of leadership which were some of Billy's finest qualities and which made him so loved and respected by all who knew him. John is captain of his form - they both are - and very popular. His Headmaster told me he would not be surprised if he (John) became dux\* of the junior school this year. If he can only retain these qualities as he grows older, I shall have reason to be proud of him.

"Elizabeth has done exceptionally well at school. In a competition open to all girls about to enter Form II three years ago, she

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won the Presbyterian Ladies' College Council's half scholarship which covered a half of her fees up till the end of last year. Results of a recent examination have just been announced. She is the school's new *Effie Liebich* scholar and is entitled to free tuition for the remaining two years. I am so pleased about this, not only for the material help which is considerable, but because of the satisfaction that it gives her to be of genuine assistance to me. She is very sensible in her outlook and most conscious of the problems facing me. She told me the other day that they had eight pounds in war savings certificates - which they wanted me to have - they had not frittered away the odd sums they have received over the years."

I was also in constant touch with Grace and, before long, she wrote to say that she hoped to visit at Easter. This was news indeed. I was touched beyond measure at this further demonstration of her great affection for me. Immediately, though, thoughts about accommodation haunted me night and day: Where in the world could I put her? I couldn't possibly have her at Chalmers Hall. Something must be found and once again the hunt was on!

## 10 THE HEARTBREAK OF HOUSE-HUNTING

Seeking a home at any time can be a trying occupation, but when it happens during an acute housing shortage, the seeker's problems are greatly intensified. I was told that home building in Australia had virtually ceased during the depression years of the 1930s and, with the Second World War following so soon after those worrying times, the country had not had an opportunity to recover. Moreover, with the return of ex-servicemen after the war and all wishing to have homes of their own, there were simply not enough houses to go around. It was generally accepted that twenty years must elapse before the situation could be eased.

Fortunately Grace had given me plenty of notice - I had two whole months in which to find suitable accommodation. Chalmers Hall had served as an excellent temporary refuge; but I was all too conscious of the fact that I could not give a home to the children during their holidays or even their occasional week-end excursions. Also, with the intake of new girls after the vacation, I had lost my room overlooking the Fitzroy Gardens and now occupied one from which I could see only dark slate roofs and black chimney tops.

I began at once to comb the newspaper columns for flats or even rooms "to let" and wrote innumerable letters in application, to most of which I did not even receive an acknowledgement. Some advertisements gave only telephone numbers and I had Professor MacCallum's permission to use the office telephone in reply.

If and when I did get through, the conversation would run something like this:

'How many are there in your family?'

'Two - my daughter and myself.'

'Do you not have a son?'

'Yes, but he is in boarding school.'

'But there will be holidays and week-ends?'

'Yes. But he won't disturb you. He is often invited to stay with friends; besides, he is a very quiet lad.'

'What do you do?'

'I work as a typist at the University.'

'Oh, you work, do you? Then you will have to have your washing on the clotheslines at the week-ends?'

Friends had warned me NOT, under any circumstance, to reveal

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the fact that I had a son, nor to tell them that I worked; but when I was faced with the questions, I could never bring myself to tell downright lies. Perhaps I was merely afraid of being found out later.

One Saturday morning, Elizabeth and I called in answer to an advertisement requiring personal application at a house in Queen's Road, opposite the Albert Park golf course. A lady answered our knock.

'Yes,' she said, 'there is a bungalow in the grounds that is available for rental, but tenancy is conditional upon assistance with a small duty in the house. This building you see is a boarding house; the tenant of the bungalow will be required to clean the two bathrooms here each morning. There is a two-year contract to be signed. Perhaps you would like first to have a look at the bath-rooms and then we will go down to the bungalow to see if you like it.'

She led the way to one of the bath-rooms - it was clean and of a fair size with a large bath on legs of a style which was current at the time. The walls were painted in the regulation "government tan" which, also, was usual for this type of bathroom.

The bungalow was set apart from the house. It was rather tastefully furnished with a double bed under a pretty cover. There was, in addition, a dressing table, a small desk, a bookcase filled with current light literature, an armchair, and a second chair besides the dressing table stool. The rental was reasonable and we were both much taken with its general appearance. Strangely, it never occurred to either of us to ask about bathroom or cooking facilities. Presumably these were available in the main house. The bungalow even had a telephone!

The lady of the house was a sympathetic person - she could see that I had a problem and after asking me a few questions said: "I would like you to have the bungalow but you look so frail that I don't think your health would stand the strain of housework on top of your working full-time at the University. I would like to suggest that perhaps Elizabeth could do it before she went to school?"

Thanking her for the suggestion, I explained that Elizabeth was in her Leaving year at school and as it was most important that she should pass her examinations, I would not consider loading her as well with housework.

'I'll tell you what I will do,' the lady said. 'I'll leave the offer open until Monday, so that you may think it over. Remember that there

is the question of the contract to be considered, so give it serious thought. Let me know your decision on Monday morning.'

That afternoon I called on Mr Adam to seek his advice. After due thought he said that if I thought the bungalow suited our needs, the housework should be no bar to my acceptance. 'After all,' he said, 'everyone has to do some form of housework these days and the cleaning of the two bathrooms should not worry yourself or Elizabeth either.'

'But don't you see, Mr Adam,' I replied, 'it isn't the actual cleaning of the bathrooms. I would do that and more willingly were it in my own home. It is the idea of doing it in a large boarding house that makes it so distasteful.'

Mrs Adam broke in: 'I see what you mean, Jean. Don't you let John push you into any such thing. I would feel exactly the same as you do were I in your place.'

After a cup of tea, I thanked them and went home - my problem still unsolved.

That evening I telephoned Lionel Adams.

I had met Lionel and his family a few weeks earlier through Cdr. Williams of HMS *Vindex*. The Commander had written to say that *Vindex* was scheduled to visit Melbourne shortly and he hoped to see me as he had some messages for me from the family in Hong Kong. In the meantime he asked if I would look up the telephone directory and send him a list of the addresses and telephone numbers of all the L. Adams listed for Melbourne. Apparently he had known an L. Adams now living in Melbourne and wished to be in touch. As a result of this Cdr. Williams was asked to take me out to dinner to meet the Adams family.

I found Lionel and Molly, his wife, a most friendly couple. They had a daughter, Julie, and a son, Martin, just as we had - about five years apart - although they were a little younger than ours. And so began a friendship that lasted for many years.

When I telephoned that Saturday evening Lionel offered to pick me up at Chalmers Hall the following morning. They would have a look at the bungalow before giving an opinion, he said. When we arrived at the house the lady was not in, so I led them to the bungalow and we peeped in at the windows.

Molly agreed that it looked most attractive and said she did not wonder that it appealed to me. Lionel, however, was more observant and practical. He saw that water was not laid on in the bungalow: 'Do you realise that Jean will have to fetch every drop of

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water she uses from the big house?' And, turning to me, he said: 'You will find that you will need many buckets of water in a day. No, Jean, forget it. It just isn't practicable. I really think you should wait for something better.'

They had packed a picnic lunch and we spent a delightful day in the hills. Summer was leaving us and early autumn tints were already colouring some of the gardens we passed on the way, but Sherbrooke Forest itself was wooded with native gums whose leaves do not change with the seasons. They tried to show me a lyre bird but although we wandered deep into the thicker parts we were not successful. The thing that mattered was that for a few hours at least I managed to lay aside my problems and was happy in the thought of my new-found friends.

The grey slate roofs and black chimney tops of a dull Monday morning soon brought me back to reality. It was true that I could now add Lionel (or 'Leo' as Molly wanted me say, because it was less formal) and Molly to my list of kind friends but I was no closer to a solution to my accommodation problems. Time was running out. Grace would soon be on her way and I would have nowhere for her to stay. It was in this depressed state of mind that I suddenly remembered Legacy.

Shortly after my return from Benalla Mr Scott of Legacy had telephoned me to make contact. He stressed that I was not to hesitate to call him should ever I be in need of assistance. He gave me his telephone number but, with all the excitement of joining the Department and the trauma of trying to cope with a new situation, Legacy had completely slipped my mind. I decided to ring him immediately, with the result that a time was made for me to call and see him at his office. As Elizabeth was on holiday, she was able to accompany me to ensure that I did not get lost.

Mr Scott listened sympathetically. 'You will find it extremely difficult to find something that would suit your needs,' he said. 'I really think that the best plan would be for Legacy to advertise on your behalf, don't you? Now don't worry yourself any longer but leave the matter to us. I will call you as soon as I have any news.'

I was relieved to have the burden lifted from my shoulders and, looking back now, it seemed that in no time at all accommodation had become available in the form of a shared flat at Elwood. Professor MacCallum gave it the nod of approval: 'Elwood is a pleasant suburb,' he said. 'It is close to the beach, which would be nice for the children.'

## A STRANGER NO MORE

Leo had a large car - an Oldsmobile, I think it was - and he and Molly moved us and our few possessions from Camberwell and helped us settle into our new home. It was a flat in a corner block, almost on the promenade, owned by a Mrs E. Caffin. When she knew me better, Mrs Caffin told me it was Legacy's connection that had influenced her to reply to the advertisement - otherwise she would have hesitated to have strangers come into her home.

We had two partially furnished rooms. The first, a fair-sized pleasantly situated bedroom with a northern aspect; the second was a small "dining" room. The floors were covered with a good quality linoleum - few houses had wall-to-wall carpets in those days.

There was a bed, a dressing table, a small wardrobe and a couple of chairs in the bedroom and as we were possessed of a bed for Elizabeth, this fitted in nicely. The small room was almost entirely taken up by a large roll-top desk filled with Mrs Caffin's personal effects and a full-sized round table. We managed just to fit in John's bed between the table and the window. It was not the ultimate in luxury or even in comfort but it was adequate for our needs; and we were together, in a place we could call "home", which was all that mattered. Moreover Mrs Caffin seemed delighted to have us. We lived with her happily for almost two years.

Meanwhile I was in constant touch with the family in Hong Kong. My father had been living in Macao during most of the war years and was still away when I left for Australia.

He now wrote to say how sorry he had been to learn that Billy had not survived the rigours of imprisonment in Japan; and how he, too, would miss Billy who had always given him such valuable and much needed advice with regard to his motor launches and his properties. He realized, he said, that I would be in need of some financial assistance; and when I had worked out how he could help me he would be glad to do so.

I gave the matter some thought - perhaps not enough thought - but I had always taken the attitude that in dealings with my father it was wise to be modest in any request I made of him. Accordingly I replied that I thought ten Australian pounds a month would be helpful. When I told Peggy she said: 'Surely you must mean ten pounds a week?' 'No,' I replied, 'I asked for ten pounds a month.' 'You must be mad, Jean. Ten pounds a month will go no way to help you.' But, knowing my father, I did not ask for more.

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His reply came back quite quickly: would I ask my bank manager to "draw" on him that amount at, say three-monthly intervals?

The manager of the National Bank at the University at that time was an Englishman. He refused point blank to do as Father suggested. 'We do such things for large companies', he said, 'not for private persons. Your father must be ignorant of the rules of Australian banking or he would not have asked you to make such a request.' I replied that I was sure my father knew a good deal about world banking procedures or he would not have made such a suggestion; but the manager would not be persuaded to change his mind.

When I told Leo, he said: 'We mustn't let this opportunity slip by - I am sure my bank manager would be pleased to assist you, if only for the privilege of dealing with a British knight living in Hong Kong who has such wide financial interests as your father. I will make a time for you to call and open an account with his bank so that when the amounts are drawn they could go straight into it. The arrangement I had with the South Melbourne branch of the E.S.&A. Bank worked perfectly for many years, although I continued to keep a current account with the National.'

It was a different story when the National telephoned me some weeks later to say that a "large sum of money" had been received to my credit and the manager was awaiting my instructions as to its disposal. He wondered if I could slip over at my convenience to have a chat about it.

Upon my enquiry as to its source, I was told that it was from the University of Hong Kong. I realised immediately that it was my back salary for the years of internment which would have constituted "a large sum". When I did go across, I was bowed in and out of the manager's office - of a sudden, I had become a valued customer!

I might add here that initial ups and downs notwithstanding I still, after a period of 40 years, value my association with the National Bank.

In a letter from Grace written just before her departure from Hong Kong she told me that our sister, Eva, had just returned from China. Eva, a doctor, had been working with Dr Robert Lim of the Chinese Red Cross throughout the war years. She now asked Grace to convey her message of sympathy to me - she felt too deeply to write - but she had sent me a gift by sea mail.

As I did not have a permanent address, all my correspondence went to Weigall & Crowther, in the care of Mr J.P. Adam so that he was always aware of what I was up to. Mr Adam now adjured me to be sure to let him know when Eva's parcel arrived, as I would most likely have to collect it from the Customs authorities, in which case he would take me. When it did come and I had to open it at the Customs Department, Mr Adam was duly shocked to see that it contained 100 Australian pounds in one pound notes! He thought that Eva was running a great risk to send a large amount of money in that way - it should have come through the bank, he said.

I explained that there was most likely a strict control over currency transfers in Hong Kong and the banks were not permitted to send large amounts out of the Colony. And even if Eva could have sent it through the bank, some of the money would have been lost in bank charges, whereas doing it the way she did, I would have the full benefit of her gift. She would doubtless have had a tedious task making daily visits to the money changers because only a pound or two could have been changed at a time. Perhaps it was a little eccentric on her part, but I felt sure that there was no irregularity in the method she used.

Mr Adam had to be content with my explanation although he was not at all convinced that I was right. He made no comment but marched me straight to the bank where the money was safely deposited.

With a shared flat over our heads and Eva's unexpected gift added, our immediate problems appeared to have been ironed out. We could now look forward with pleasant anticipation to the joy of a visit from Grace.

## 11 GRACE

Grace and I grew up together. She is almost two years my junior and although this seemed a large gap during our early years, by the time we went to school the gap had begun to lessen. When we went on to University hardly any gap existed and people used to remark that we were more like close friends than sisters; in actual fact as well as being sisters, we were close friends - we did the same subjects and revelled in the same sporting activities, and although I was a stronger swimmer than Grace, she was by far the better tennis player.

It was but natural that we had our occasional arguments and disagreements. No two persons of reasonable intelligence and individuality could live in such close proximity and not have differences of opinion; but I cannot recall ever having any bitterness in those differences between us: if we did have an occasional quarrel, as children often do, I would walk away, sulky and offended and Grace would invariably be the first to make up.

We spent an idyllic childhood on the Peak in Hong Kong. Mother was out much of the time for she had many friends, all of whom wanted to see her. Father was often ill and he needed her - it seemed all the time. We were therefore left mostly to our governess, Miss E. Hecht, who had come out to us from England and to Mr C.K. Chiu, our Chinese tutor. These two brought us up. We were fortunate in that each, in his or her own way, was kind and highly principled. They were firm but never harsh. We learnt the rudiments of the "three Rs" in the mornings and had Chinese lessons in the early afternoons, after which Miss Hecht invariably took us out for a walk and we would see a little of the other Peak children. It was through Miss Hecht's precept and example that we learnt the fundamental principles of right and wrong; and from the "Old Master", as he was known to us, we absorbed a good sprinkling of Confucian philosophy.

We went to school in 1917, I was two years ahead and so left school earlier. The time was made up by a trip to Europe in 1924 with Father, to attend the Wembley Exhibition in London, and by a three-month's tour with Mother of Buddhist temples in China. These excursions were followed by a two-year spell - in which Grace joined me in 1926 - at a Chinese secondary school. We both entered the University of Hong Kong in 1927, reading Letters and Philosophy.

We had two wonderful and, for me, eventful years, attending lectures in the mornings and spending many an afternoon in the students' recreation grounds or at launch picnics when we were not swimming at Repulse Bay. The beach, in those days, was beautiful and uncrowded; it rated as one of the best in the Far East. Father had given us a car - an *Erskine*, which was a light-weight product of the Studebaker Company built in competition against the growing small car market - and an unlimited petrol supply. All we had to do was to sign to have the tank filled, with no questions asked. The *Erskine* was a lovely car to drive, but it was very hard on tyres and, going up and down the Peak as we did at high speed and in the days before road surfaces were banked, the first set wore out in a little over twelve months! It is no wonder that the model was discontinued after two years.

Grace and I were separated in 1929 when I was married, leaving her to complete her course and take out her degree in 1931. Then, following a couple of years overseas Grace, too, was married and came to live across the park from us in Kowloon Tong. The immediate pre-war years saw the two families living close by in complete harmony - our husbands viewing our friendship with incredible tolerance and our children - Grace's and Horace's Shirley and our Elizabeth and John - carrying on the tradition of close family ties.

The war years separated us once again. Billy and I had sent Elizabeth and John to Australia six months before the Japanese invasion. Billy was a prisoner-of-war, first in Hong Kong and then in Japan, from where he did not come back. I spent those years in internment in Stanley Camp (Hong Kong) from where Grace and I had a tenuous contact through the several food parcels which she managed to send in to me.

I remember it was during the early summer of 1942 and the weather had begun to warm up when I managed to slip a note into the engine of the Medical Department van asking Grace for some summer clothing. I knew that she had received it when, after several weeks, one of her playsuits came in in a parcel. And then, one day, someone I did not know asked if I was Mrs Gittins and to my reply in the affirmative handed me a note. It was from Grace. She said that life in Hong Kong had become untenable and she and her family were leaving for China. I can still recall the absolute desolation which that note brought; so long as Grace was in Hong Kong I was assured of a certain amount of support from the family - with Grace in China,

I was well and truly on my own.

And so the years of separation went on with me in the relative security - such as it was - of Stanley Camp until War's end and Grace and her family in China being pursued from place to place by the advancing Japanese troops. The fugitive family finally linked up with the American forces from whom they gained some protection, but they were forced to await their turn before transport became available to take them back to Hong Kong. By that time I had left for Australia on the aircraft carrier HMS *Vindex* which sailed on 18 September so I did not see Grace again until she arrived in Melbourne.

Grace had reached Sydney by sea early on Thursday 18 April which was my birthday and at 9 a.m. had telephoned to speak to me. But I was a little late and Professor MacCallum took the call.

When I arrived he told me I had just missed my sister: 'She need not have told me who she was,' he said, 'I would have known that it was your sister calling: she speaks just like you! She sent her love and asked me to let you know that she would be arriving by train on Saturday morning.'

Saturday 20 April 1946, and the children and I waited impatiently at Spencer Street Station for the arrival of the *Spirit of Progress*. It was a beautiful autumn day when the train pulled up punctually at five minutes after 11 a.m. Grace had timed her visit well. I had had Good Friday to make final preparations for her and with the four complete days of the Easter break ahead of us, there was ample time to catch up on one another's news.

The weeks before her arrival had been a mixture of hope and despair - hope that we would be able to resume our former close relationship and despair with the realisation that Grace's visit must necessarily be a temporary one and then I would be left in a situation far worse than before she came. It had taken no time for my landlady, Mrs Caffin, to spot me as a tyro and although she did her best to guide me through the first stages of housekeeping, I encountered fresh difficulties at every turn.

To begin with, I knew next to nothing about cooking. I had never before been near to a gas cooker, nor did I even know where to put a piece of bread to make toast. Moreover, because of war-time shortages sugar, tea, butter, eggs and meat were rationed. The children's ration cards had been surrendered to their boarding schools so that whereas I could stretch what I was allowed to cover my own needs, the difficulty in obtaining meat, especially when they

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came home for long weekends, presented quite a problem. I looked forward to the end of the school's first term in May when Elizabeth would come home to live.

I survived mainly on eggs when I could get them but, mostly, I would stop by in the city to have a meal before going home. Besides the expense of eating out, meals were not served after 7 p.m. so that if I were delayed at the office or by waiting for a tram which ran but infrequently at that time of day, I would be turned away without being served.

I tried, if I felt I could afford it, to go up to "The Wentworth", a restaurant in Collins Street, situated half way towards Russell Street, because it was quieter and more "respectable" but, mostly, I would stop by at a cafe in Swanston Street, mid-way between Collins and Flinders Streets, because it was cheaper and it was on my way towards the station where I had to board a train for Elwood.

Here I was sitting quietly having my dinner one evening when I was joined by a couple of rather garrulous men who talked loudly to one another. Suddenly one of them leaned towards me: 'Hey, lady', he called out, 'are you deaf or are you dumb? Why don't you answer when we speak to you?' In spite of his belligerent attitude, I replied quietly that I really didn't know that they were speaking to me as I couldn't understand their speech.

'Blow me!' he shouted, much to my embarrassment, 'if she isn't a bloody POM! She doesn't understand our speech, she says. Well, we're a couple of wharfies. We've had a hard day's work and we've had a couple of drinks at Young & Jackson's across the way; and now we want our tea. Don't yer think yer could be civil and talk to us?'

Needless to say, I escaped as soon as I could but, for many years after, the mere fact of walking along that part of Swanston Street, or of waiting for a tram at the crossing with Flinders Street, has always brought to mind the unpleasant experience. I would recall also the sight of crowds pouring out of Flinders Street Station, and of drunks rolling out of Young & Jackson's, and remember the feeling that should I fall, no one would come to my assistance and the crowds would simply walk over me.

Never in my life before - and I had travelled in England and France, Spain and Portugal, and some of the Mediterranean countries, as well as parts of China and Japan, had I seen so many drunks on the streets. Words that someone said about Australia, read and long forgotten, kept running through the back of my mind - I was delighted to find the passage quoted in a recent publication\*:

\*Murray-Smith, S. (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Quotations*, Heinemann Publishers Australia Pty. Ltd. (1984)

"In Rhineland in Germany, beer and wine are the general beverages. Drunkenness is seldom seen, and is, when seen, considered a social disgrace ( . . . ) the hospitals and gaols of Victoria (are) filled with the unhappy beings who have been morally and physically the victims of drunkenness ( . . . ) the Lunatic Asylum - large enough to contain all the madmen of Rhineland, but scarcely large enough for the self-made lunatics of Victoria, who have drowned their reason in alcohol."

*Transactions of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria* (Melbourne, Victoria 1859), Vol.3, p.xxviii.

The law requiring pubs to stop serving alcohol after 6 p.m., which was the main reason for what became known as "the six o'clock swill" was repealed in 1966.

Happily the area has now been transformed into a City Square and instead of the cafes, crowds and drunks, trees and fountains allow of pleasant relaxation for city workers, many of whom spend a leisure hour sharing their lunches with the sparrows and minah birds that inhabit the Melbourne Town Hall.

With the onset of heat and high relative humidity in the weather during my first summer in Melbourne, early signs of beri-beri had made their appearance. Not only did my ankles swell and my feet drag, but my finger-tips lost their feeling and, unless I held on to things consciously in a tight grip, I would drop them thereby breaking several pieces of crockery. By the time Grace arrived in April, my general health had begun to fail.

Beri-beri is a nutritional disease caused by the high carbohydrate intake in a rice diet without an adequate supply of protein. Its onset is insidious so that many of the internees in camp suffered its debilitating effects without being aware of its existence. Their symptoms, however, had been relieved to a certain extent by regular doses of at that time a new synthetic drug, known as thiamine, which our ex-Director of Medical Services, Dr Selwyn-Clarke, managed to obtain through the Red Cross. Strangely enough I did not, to all appearances, seem to have been affected; although Professor Digby, the erstwhile Professor of Surgery of the University of Hong Kong, who was a family friend, had frequently examined my ankles, as we sat by the hillside having our meagre lunches, for any sign of the dreaded pitting oedema. He told me that he had strongly disapproved of my voluntary entry into the camp but, once I was there, he had felt obliged to keep a professional eye on my health. If the truth were

known, he was secretly in agreement with the principles which had prompted my decision.

It is strange, therefore, that what was obviously a nutritional disorder should not have manifested itself until I was back on a normal diet in Melbourne; and stranger still is the fact that the disease, after having plagued me summer after summer for the past 40 years, should now suddenly have come under reasonable control through the release of a new diuretic drug, prescribed by a conscientious general practitioner who happens to read his journals.

Grace and I made the most of our first days together. Mrs Caffin very thoughtfully went to visit her daughter so as to leave us to ourselves. Having laid in some provisions previously we did not even stir out of the flat for three days but spent our time making up for the long years which had been lost to us.

The city shops re-opened on Easter Tuesday and, buoyed with Grace's support, I decided that we should make a short visit into Melbourne. But I had probably done too much talking since her arrival and was, as a consequence, exhausted as soon as we mingled with the crowds intent on picking up bargains at the Easter sales; so we left almost immediately for home.

Of a sudden, something snapped within me and, feeling both physically as well as spiritually exhausted, I handed over to Grace all duties connected with household management and lapsed into a state of moronic listlessness. It took me so long to snap out of it that Grace began to fear for my sanity. She told me later that each time she opened the paper, she expected to see headlines reporting the accidental killing of a woman by a tram whilst she was crossing the street!

I used to have the *Argus* delivered each morning. No sooner had we moved into Mrs Caffin's flat when Elizabeth said: 'Mother, you must place an order for a paper.' There were four newspapers in those days. 'The *Sun* is for people who can't read', she continued, 'the *Herald* is for those who can't think. The *Age* is Labour, so you must order the *Argus*.' We had the *Argus* until its demise in 1957.

On looking back to that period of my life in Melbourne I feel that Grace's main purpose in coming here was probably to take me home. I was in a bad way and often wished that I was back in Stanley. She told me how they had been shocked and sorry over the news of Billy's death in Japan and how they had admired the courage I had shown in the hopes and plans expressed in my early letters. But, as the months went by and my difficulties multiplied, they could tell that I was not

going to make it in the now single-handed battle for survival in a strange land. They all felt that I should go home: the message she carried from family and friends was to "bring Jean home".

It was only natural that I would be grateful and fully appreciative of their concern and, above all, I was deeply touched by Grace's actual demonstration of her affection; but I felt that I had only just undertaken the trust that Professor MacCallum had placed in me in the request he had made for me to take over the secretaryship at Miss Davies's retirement. I felt that I should get myself fully established before taking leave. Furthermore, having been separated from the children for over five years, I could hardly leave them yet again just as we were about to get accustomed to being together once more. There was no question of taking them back with me to Hong Kong in its present state of disarray.

The conflict of priorities, the infinite pleasure of having Grace with me and the dreadful fear that I would soon be deprived of her presence further undermined my health and although Grace had taken over the chores of housekeeping which enabled us to have outings in the weekends, the realisation that it was temporary only made clearer the loss I would have to endure once she was gone. In spite of visits to the Zoo and trips to the Dandenongs and even an all-day outing to Lorne, I could not throw off the growing depression which haunted the back of my mind at all times.

Grace tried her best to shake me out of my despondency. She took the children ice-skating on Saturday afternoons and in the evenings so that I could have more rest, and even had expensive skating boots made specially to fit their feet. But I had lost all incentive to pull myself together and instead of improving, my mental health rapidly deteriorated. Many a time, throughout those early years, when I bent over to turn off the gas heater before leaving the office of an evening, it was all I could do to refrain from turning the tap on again after the flame was extinguished. It would have been so easy - and I would not have to struggle any more.

However, the thought of Grace waiting anxiously for my return or the shock it would give to Mrs Delaney, our cleaner, the following morning and, above all, the certainty that the children would not understand and so perhaps blame themselves for having failed me, always stayed my hand.

Acute melancholia is a long-lasting ailment and can recur at any time, but experience has taught me that distraction does offer relief; and now, if ever I awake with what I refer to as "that sinking feeling".

I immediately busy myself with some demanding occupation - be it even some menial household chore, so long as it requires absorption of mind - and the feeling soon passes.

Things came to a head when I received a letter from the United Kingdom Army Liaison Staff in Melbourne with the offer of repatriation to Hong Kong. There had been a previous offer from the office of the Vice-Admiral, British Pacific Fleet which, on my having decided to remain in Melbourne until the completion of the children's education, I had refused. I now threw the letter into the waste paper basket but Grace, feeling as she did, at once retrieved it and we argued the pros and cons of an acceptance yet again.

The matter was settled in the Department. The situation between Frieda and myself had become untenable ever since she returned from her holiday through my having to act as her understudy without seeming to have an eye on her job, so on a day of high emotion, I begged Professor MacCallum to marry her whilst we were still friends. They decided to do so quietly during the June vacation whilst Dr Lowe acted as Head of the Department and Mr Guthrie and I were the only ones to be party to the intrigue. Whilst they were away for their honeymoon, Dr Lowe decided to take advantage of the vacation to arrange for a programme of skin testing on the students for tuberculosis as part of a research project on which he was engaged. It was during the lunch hour and whether it was due to fatigue or hunger or anything else, I suddenly passed out. Thoroughly alarmed, Dr Lowe sent me to the eminent neurologist, Dr Leonard B. Cox, who held an honorary lectureship in Neuropathology and was a friend of the Professor.

Dr Cox gave me a thorough examination. He could find no organic disorder, he said, but I was certainly not in a fit state to carry on with the exacting duties which a secretary to Professor MacCallum demanded. He recommended a prolonged holiday and agreed that a trip to Hong Kong was most opportune.

The matter was therefore settled without question. I saw the Registrar who felt sure, he said, that the position would be held open for me and encouraged me to apply immediately for three months' sick leave. Professor MacCallum fully endorsed the Registrar's action, agreeing that I should go whenever I wished.

We advertised immediately for an Acting Secretary and a Mrs E. Scott was appointed. Meanwhile Grace and I applied to travel together and we managed to get passages on the MV *Nellore*, due to depart for Hong Kong on 29 July 1946. My accommodation at Mrs



14. *The Main Entrance Hall.*



15. *The Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Pathology.*

Within the Department



PERSPECTIVE VIEW FROM NORTH



PERSPECTIVE VIE

16. Architect's Drawing: *The House I Did Not Build.*

Caffin's was kept open but it was decided that Elizabeth should return as a boarder to PLC. It was a great disappointment for her but both she and John realised that this further separation was necessary for the sake of my health and both, as usual, accepted the situation with excellent grace.

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Grace and I boarded the MV *Nellore* shortly before midday on Monday 29 July. Molly and Leo saw us off - by then they had become my closest friends; there was no problem that Leo could not solve; there was nothing he could not, or would not, do to help me.

They picked us up at Elwood and took us to Port Melbourne where *Nellore* was alongside at Station Pier. We had barely the time for a quick drink before the bell sounded for friends to leave the ship. Luncheon was served immediately after; when it was over *Nellore* was well on her way to Hong Kong.

A motor ship of just under 10,000 tons, *Nellore* was built during the War and christened *Empire Joy*. She was commissioned by the British Admiralty in 1945 as a supply ship for the Merchant Service. In May of the following year she was handed over to the Eastern and Australian Shipping Company, which had lost its entire fleet as a result of enemy action, to replace the old *Nellore*. Her officers were Australian; she had a Chinese crew; we were passengers on her maiden voyage under the new flag.

Built as a cargo ship, with six large, comfortable cabins for a maximum of twelve passengers, extra bunks had been hastily fitted to enable her to carry expatriates back to Hong Kong; Grace and I shared a cabin with a Chinese lady; there were some thirty passengers in all.

The voyage was pleasantly uneventful, the weather kind: the journey was expected to last three weeks. The master, Captain Clive Stratsford, did not join passengers for lunch - in fact he was seldom to be seen. It was said that he had captained the old *Nellore* when she was sunk in 1942. Passengers and crew were salvaged and he had been forced to spend the War years in a Japanese prison camp where he was held responsible for his passengers - mainly women and children. It is hardly to be wondered that when he took command of his new ship he preferred to leave the responsibility of passengers to his fellow officers.

The Chief Steward, Mr Jones, had also served on the old *Nellore* and had been interned in the same camp as Captain Stratsford but, not having had to share the responsibility for his fellow internees, he did not carry with him the Captain's psychological problems: he was, in fact, genial and solicitous and did all he could to see to his passengers' welfare. Moreover, having brought Elizabeth and John

to Melbourne in 1941 he recognised the name "Gittins" and, especially as the children had been left in his charge after Mrs Jack left the ship in Sydney, he felt a special regard for one whom he possibly considered an old friend.

Mr Jones placed us at meals next to the Chief Engineer, Mr A.J. Norman, who turned out to be an excellent host. As a matter of fact, we had not been on board for any more than three days before Grace decided that if I persisted in my intention to return to Melbourne after the visit to Hong Kong, I could do no better than to book my passage immediately on arrival, so as to ensure that I would travel back on *Nellore*'s return voyage.

We arrived on schedule on Sunday 18 August and as we passed the familiar landmarks I could not have guessed that it would be the last time that I would view them from the sea for, on my next visit, I was to travel by air: the speed and convenience of air travel having replaced the comfort and pleasure of a sea voyage! I did, however, return to Melbourne by sea in 1950, the idea being to delay my arrival for as long as possible. The prospect of an early resumption of my exile did not appeal.

We entered the harbour by its eastern entrance, that is, through Lyemun pass - and I remembered the pounding by enemy guns that 4th Battery had suffered in preparation for a landing on the night of 18-19 December, in 1941, when my friend Una Brown's husband, Harold, had been fatally wounded. He, like Billy, was an electrical engineer and had been a sergeant in the Battery. He normally worked with Otis Elevator Company and he and Billy always travelled together to Volunteer practice in the evenings and weekends. The picture arose in my mind's eye of the search lights that night picking out the small craft in which the enemy crossed the harbour; and although we had been told that the guns of 4th Battery had been put out of action and the fort evacuated, I knew that Billy was still at his post.

Instead of crossing the harbour to berth at the Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company's wharves as is usual for overseas vessels, we tied up at North Point, the reason being that there were race horses to unload for the stables of the Hong Kong (later Royal Hong Kong) Jockey Club. It was obvious to me that Hong Kong was making preparations for the forthcoming racing season due to resume in a couple of months' time. There was no more definite indication than this that life was "to go on as usual" in the war-ravaged colony, in spite of the attitude shown by many Melbournians who regarded my

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proposed visit to Hong Kong for the sake of my health with extreme scepticism, their attitude being that I would get neither rest nor proper recreation there.

One piece of news which greeted us and for which I was totally unprepared was that there was a strike on! One expected such things in Australia, but in Hong Kong it was unbelievable, especially as that symbol of capitalism, the Star Ferries, should have stopped running because of a strike by its workers! Strong winds and high waves could drive other craft to shelter but it was the boast of the Company's management that the Star Ferry stopped at nothing short of the severest typhoons! I know this to be a fact because I was once on a ferry which battled wind and wave to struggle across the harbour but in spite of the assistance of the stoutest of cables thrown from the pier she failed to berth in Hong Kong because the cable snapped under the strain, and the ferry was forced to go back to Kowloon with her passengers still on board.

The current strike fortunately did not delay us, as Grace's husband, Horace, who was a Police Magistrate, was able to arrange for a launch to meet us. In no time at all we had crossed the harbour and, ten minutes later, we were at her home in Kowloon Tong.

It was an emotional event - my first post-war visit to Hong Kong and although, due to widespread looting during hostilities my own home was no more, Grace's was as familiar to me as though it had been mine. Billy, too, was no longer there to support me and our old amah, "Grouser", had died of a broken heart. I don't think she ever recovered from the parting with John when we sent him and Elizabeth away. As for myself, she had written me off as a most heartless creature as she could not reconcile herself to the fact that it was in the children's best interests to be sent away.

These thoughts raced through my mind as Grace's amah, Ah Sing, welcomed us. Quite overcome, she was unable to speak but I sensed the depth of her feeling in the lovely bunch of roses in my room which spoke more eloquently than any words could have done.

Having the use of the Magistrate's car for the day and the police launch as well, we recrossed the harbour in the early afternoon to call on Father. It was almost five years since I had last seen him but even though he looked older, he had lost none of his mental alertness. We had been trained from childhood never to rush into his presence without first being announced and, in the few minutes of waiting for an audience, I went out to see the servants who had known me from childhood.

There is nothing like sympathy to break down one's reserve and I would have been less than human had I not felt a surge of emotion at their display of concern at my loss of husband and home. Besides this, Billy had been a general favourite with the amahs for he possessed that quality which endeared him to elderly women. When Father sent word out to say he was ready to see me, I could not entirely hide the fact that I had shed a few tears so that, as soon as he saw me, he demanded to know who had upset me in spite of his having given specific instructions that no one should do so. He felt irritated at having been disobeyed.

Naturally I hastened to explain the situation and, after again expressing his sympathy and repeating how he, too, would miss Billy, he told me that he wanted me to enjoy my visit home. As a first step he planned to give me a luncheon at which I was to have anyone I wished to see. He would have liked to have had a dinner party as that would seem to be more convenient for my friends, but for health reasons, he never attended functions in the evening and he particularly wished to be present at this one. I then handed him a letter which Professor MacCallum had written to him - I expected it was to say how pleased he was with my work. Professor MacCallum had a fine way of saying the right thing.

Going back to his subject, Father explained that as the Peak house, *The Falls*, had been so badly damaged by prolonged shelling and bombing during hostilities in 1941, as its grounds had been used as headquarters for a mule corps, the party would have to be held at *Idlewild*, his town residence. The dining room there was not as large as the one at *The Falls* but as some of my friends would still be away on leave, he felt sure that it would hold as many as I would like to ask. I was to let him have a guest list as soon as I could.

I was naturally delighted at his suggestion to show his appreciation for Billy and his happiness that I had come home in the way he proposed to do, especially as I knew that it would have to be a real effort on his part. He even remembered to ask after the children - he had been pleased to hear, he said, that they were doing so well and he hoped that he would be seeing them again before too long a time had elapsed.

I might add here that the luncheon was a huge success. The dining room was filled. Besides the family, guests included several of the University professors, the Director of Medical Services, those of my Stanley friends, including police officers, who were in Hong Kong at the time, the Chief Engineer, and other Australians from the *Nellore*.

Grace had gone on to Vic's to wait for me and I left *Idlewild* in Father's car, being driven by his old chauffeur who had taught us all to drive. It was particularly good to see him again for he was like one of the family and always took care to patch up any minor dent or scratch I made on the huge seven-seater Stutz tourer which on occasion I had the loan of, to take the Girl Guides for outings to Stanley or Repulse Bay.

A short reunion with Vic and M.K. and their family and, as I had the loan of the car for the rest of the day, Grace and I went on to see our youngest sister, Florence, and her husband, Dr K.C. Yeo. Both families had had a tough time during the Japanese occupation. Because of his membership of the Hong Kong Legislative Council under the British Government, M.K. had been forced, under threat of imprisonment and possible execution, to sit on the Japanese Council; and K.C., who was a Senior Officer in the Hong Kong Government Medical and Health Service, had been thrown into prison when the Director, Dr Selwyn-Clarke, was arrested and, subsequently, at War's end when he and his family were holidaying in Sydney, K.C. had been summarily recalled, long before his leave was due to expire, to help rebuild the Service in Hong Kong.

Their war-time experiences had left scars on their faces which would take years to heal and it made me feel almost ashamed that, slim though I was and carrying as I did the after-effects of malnutrition, I seemed to have been in a relative haven in internment in Stanley, compared to the "freedom" that my sisters enjoyed: Grace, as a refugee in war-torn China, and Vic and Florence in the new "co-prosperity sphere" under Japanese rule in occupied Hong Kong.

I spent the next day with Billy's parents. The family had suffered severely during the fighting. They, with their two youngest daughters, Irene and Phyllis, had gone into China after the fall of Hong Kong. They were now back in their own home in Kowloon Tong, at the foot of Lion Rock.

The two girls had both been widowed in the brief period of hostilities: their husbands, members of the HKVDC, had lost their lives - Ernie (E.F.) Fincher, a bombardier in 5th Battery, at Tsai Wan on the night of the landing on 18 December; and Sonny (Arthur) Bliss, a gunner, in Stanley - after the surrender: Stanley Fort, having been cut off from all communications, the men fought on, not knowing that hostilities had ceased.

Of the other members of the family, Charlotte, the eldest, had

been evacuated from the outport, Amoy, to Sydney in 1941. Her husband, Frank Fisher, who was the British and American Tobacco Company's representative at Amoy, had been caught in Hong Kong while on a business trip when hostilities broke out, and had been interned with us in Stanley, as was another daughter, Mabel, whose husband, George Hall, was a prisoner-of-war with Billy in Shumshulpo camp in Kowloon. Yet another daughter, Daisy, had stayed on in Hong Kong. Her husband died during the war years. Billy, of course, had been a victim of malnutrition in a prison camp in Japan five months before the end of the War, and their other son, Victor, on holding a Commission with the rank of Lt-Colonel in the Army Intelligence Corps, had spent the war years in China and India.

Mr and Mrs Gittins were delighted to see me but the welcome was understandably restrained. Mrs Gittins, however, was particularly anxious to hear about the children and, as I was never tired of talking about them, the day ended on a happy note.

The next two days were spent roaming the city, meeting with acquaintances on the street and calling on friends in their offices. There was many a warm handshake - mute expression of compassionate friendship - many a smile of real pleasure to find me looking so well, and promises were exchanged of further meetings before I sailed again.

I had promised Elizabeth's House Mistress, Miss McInnes, that on my return I would give a talk about Hong Kong to the boarders of PLC. This I did on the afternoon of Sunday 6 October, and I can do no better at this stage than to quote from the notes I made for the occasion:

"On Wednesday afternoon Grace and I borrowed Father's car to show some Australian friends the Hong Kong of which we were so proud. We went via Shaukiwan past the Shekko road to Stanley, where we had a look at what had once been the camp for the internment of British and Allied civilians. Our former quarters have been re-occupied by their rightful owners, the warders of Stanley Prison, who are "getting some of their own back" from the Japanese War Criminals in the gaol. We visited the cemetery, beautiful in peace and simple testimony, where so many were laid in everlasting repose. From Stanley we drove to Repulse Bay and then up to the Peak. We left the car to look down from the tram terminus over the harbour, a grand panorama, seemingly untouched by the ravages of war. The cable tram was again running for a few, very few,

are braving the inconvenience of living in their old homes on the Peak. There would have been a far greater number had accommodation been at all possible, but the ruination of this district is quite unbelievable. A number of the houses had been damaged during the hostilities, others simply tell a tale of sheer criminal neglect. For the Japanese, to show their hatred of our people, and in the desire to degrade them, had deliberately suspended all vigilance during the occupation and had encouraged the starving populace of the city to plunder and destroy where they would. My own father's house suffered both from war and pillage, and as we wandered around the old homestead, we were thankful that our mother, passing away as she had done before the War, had been spared the heartbreak which would otherwise have been hers.

"Friday 30 August was the first anniversary of Liberation Day for Hong Kong, and the event was marked with a ceremony at the Cenotaph, and the issue of two Peace stamps. The ceremony was short and impressive: a changing of the guards, bugles, and a march past - sufficient demonstration of remembrance and good faith. The stamps of two denominations show the lion of Great Britain in company with the Chinese Phoenix - symbolic of a new era of prosperity and peace.

"Thanksgiving Service was held on Sunday 1 September, at St. John's Cathedral. The stained glass windows which had been removed by the Japanese are still missing and the organ has not yet recovered from prolonged neglect, but the atmosphere was quiet and restful, and the Service, conducted by the Bishop, was beautiful in its simplicity, and was in tune with our mood.

"In the days of my youth I have, on more than one occasion, had the doubtful honour of being summoned before a police magistrate. This was usually on account of some trifling infringement of traffic regulations, or due to failure to comply with the order for muzzling dogs. So I accepted with interest and pleasure an invitation from the magistrate (Horace) to attend the police court as a spectator and as a special friend of the police. It took me quite some time to recognise in the spruce-looking police officers I met at the Kowloon Magistracy the faces of friends and former fellow-internees. I must mention just one in particular. He was a big, broad "ginger", and looked particularly smart that morning. He recognised me but my memory failed, and it wasn't until half way through the court's proceedings that light dawned and I was able to connect this handsome hero with our faithful but grimy "Smoky Joe". For three and a half years,

Inspector Joe Witcroft had been stoker of our grass boiler for hot water in Stanley and one whom I had blessed on more than one occasion for a touch of simple kindness.

"I was asked daily: 'How do you find Hong Kong?' I am sure you would be interested to know. I do not exaggerate when I say that I was simply astounded at the progress she has made in the year. From being a "ghost" city in September 1945, Hong Kong is one of the busiest trade centres of the world today. Throughout the five weeks of my stay, the harbour was filled daily with ships from all parts of the world, busily unloading cargo of all description. I counted them one day. There were no less than seventy five ships of over, say, 6,000 tons - and that was only as far as I could see. It is true that this number included ships of His Majesty's Navy, whose base is now in Hong Kong. There is a daily service of planes to Canton, Shanghai, Hankow and Chungking, and an airmail service three times a week via Singapore to the United Kingdom and Australia. The Canton train pours in crowds of people twice daily. The estimated influx of population is from five to seven thousand a day. Motor traffic to Canton is possible, though not comfortable, for the roads are as yet in poor repair; and the rail service to Hankow has resumed. Transportation problems in Hong Kong and Kowloon are being rapidly solved. The number of taxis is increasing daily. On the Island itself, trams are running from Shaukiwan to West Point, buses to the University and Repulse Bay, and the cable tram to the Peak. When the strike was settled, the Star and Yaumati Ferries resumed their cross-the-harbour runs and even the vehicular ferry, with but a single boat, struggles valiantly to give a restricted service. The Japanese had shipped away most of our modern diesel-engined buses from Kowloon but, nothing daunted, the Kowloon Motor Bus Company is running a regular service of converted trucks to Kowloon City, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon Tong and Shumshuiipo. It is true that these buses are not as comfortable as they might be but they served the purpose. One had, moreover, to put up with little eccentricities on the part of the driver, in illustration of which I will tell you of a rather amusing incident. I had had dinner with a friend in town and, independent though I have become, it was still considered a little risky for a woman to travel to Kowloon Tong alone at night. We verified from the conductor the time of the last bus from Kowloon Tong, and were told that it ran at 11.15 p.m. Well, I was seen home safely and my escort left in good time to catch the bus at the corner. I leave it to you to imagine his chagrin when, at ten minutes past

eleven, the bus driver took it into his head to skip the last section of the route, and turning in long before he reached the corner where my friend was waiting, made for home and bed. This friend gallantly told me, when he related the story, that he enjoyed his three and a half mile walk!

"I cannot tell you very much about the cost of living, because I lived entirely on my family and friends. I do know, however, that rice and flour are rationed and their prices controlled. All residents able to prove citizenship of seven years' standing before the war are entitled to buy Government rice at twenty cents a catty. (For the information of those who are not aware of it, the exchange is approximately 1/6d. to the Hong Kong dollar and 12-13 dollars to the Australian pound. A catty weighs one pound and a third.) Prices of necessities are all controlled at 2-4 times the pre-war value, and to enforce this, there has been set up a special board. Price lists are published frequently and offenders prosecuted and severely fined. The price of meals even in restaurants is coming down. When I first arrived, a modest luncheon for six people without drinks cost about eight Australian pounds, but before my departure, one could have the same for a little over four pounds. Vegetables are still scarce and expensive, but we have always been short of vegetables during the summer months. However, to ease the situation, the Government is in the process of arranging a service to buy and collect all vegetables for the market from the growers themselves, and then retail them at a reasonable price. The luxury market is not controlled. Drinks and nylon stockings are easily obtainable: they can be indulged in if your purse allows it. Clothes, too, are still very expensive.

"The Hong Kong Electric and the China Light and Power Companies are both functioning normally and are supplying sufficient electricity for general consumption, including the air conditioning of cinemas, the Dairy Farm and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. And is it a necessity, with temperatures over 90°F, and relative humidity averaging 95%? The Gas Company is also making headway and is now busily engaged in repairing the mains to the Peak.

"The bathing beaches are as lovely as ever, but a shortage of private cars makes them as yet a little inaccessible to the general public. But shipments of cars are arriving every day, as are supplies of all manner of goods. There's not much you can't buy in Hong Kong today and in connection with this I might mention that there is no shortage of good cigarettes: trayfuls of the best British and

and American brands are carried around for your choice and convenience - such is the enterprise of the Chinese tradesman.

"Many of the schools have re-opened and the Hong Kong University is waiting for results from London of the Matriculation examination held earlier in the year. First year classes in Medicine, Engineering, Arts and Science will be started in November, though the sight of some of the University buildings is heart-breaking enough. In the main building, the Great Hall stands open to the sky, stripped of all but the bare walls, the Medical Schools, the Science Building, the Engineering Workshops and Laboratories are one and all complete shells: all equipment having been stolen and woodwork, including stools, doors, bench tops and floorboards, as well as copper piping, wrenched off and carried away. The Library fortunately was saved from looters by a loyal Chinese staff, so in the main reading room now stand the desks of three professors who are acting as deans of faculties and that of the Acting Registrar - the nucleus of a brighter Lighthouse of the East, where for five years the lamp had failed to burn.

"One thing holds back the programme of reconstruction: the housing situation is desperate. Added to the daily arrival of former residents is the great influx of refugees from China. Accommodation is an ever-increasing problem: it is strained to breaking point. The long summer has passed quietly without epidemics of dysentery or cholera, the high incidence of malaria has been controlled with the periodic spraying of DDT from the air, but with the advent of winter, the sharp rise in cases of smallpox is giving the health authorities cause for grave concern. Mass vaccination is widely and persistently encouraged and clinics have been set up everywhere to facilitate this. There have been some very severe reactions. A friend of mine suffered much pain and embarrassment from this. In fact he had to grow a moustache in record time to hide the blisters around his mouth before he could attend the feast of the "fatted calf" which my father gave.

"The city is overcrowded, transporation is difficult, the cost of living is high and, in spite of good reservoirs, severe water restrictions have had to be introduced. There are moaners in the hotel lobbies and beggars in the streets, but the people on the whole are happy and contented. Banished forever are the expressions of prolonged strain and abject misery which, but a year ago, were evident on almost every face. A gallant people, supporting a brave Government, all anxious to lend a hand in the rebirth of Hong Kong."

My visit was drawing to a close and with each passing day my heart sank lower. I had made up my mind that I needed a car in Melbourne and, I suppose, with a borrowed car always available at a moment's notice, the desire had become more acute. As a matter of fact, before I left Melbourne I had asked Leo to find out what it would cost for a small car. With his usual helpfulness he had told me that it would cost 500 Australian pounds to put a Standard "Little Nine" on the road and he had made a reservation for me to have the first refusal for the next one that came in. The waiting time was approximately twelve months. I told Grace that I had decided to ask Father to help me.

'You can ask', Grace said, 'but don't be too disappointed if he doesn't oblige. He lost a lot of property during the war, you know. He is always moaning about it and it is a wonder that he hasn't complained to you. In any case, there is no harm in asking. See what he says and perhaps Horace and M.K. could help you if he doesn't.'

Vic gave a similar response when I mentioned the matter to her and I waited my opportunity.

It came one day when I least expected it. Father asked me what I thought of the newspapers in Melbourne. 'I wouldn't know,' I said. 'I never read them.'

'What?' he exclaimed. 'You never read a newspaper? How do you know what is going on in the world?'

'I don't,' I said. 'I just mind my own business. Besides, where would I find the time to do so? In the mornings I have to get dressed, tidy my room, get my breakfast and eat it and then wash up - all this before I leave for work. I have to take three different forms of transport to get to the University by nine o'clock. I work the whole day and by the time I get home in the evening it is well after 6 p.m. Then the whole process I went through in the morning has to be done in reverse before I can go to bed. In fact, I was going to ask you if you would help me with a car - unless I get one soon, I shall surely die!'

To do my father justice, he at once replied that of course he would help me. 'When you get home,' he said kindly, 'you work out how much you would need from me and I will send you a bank draft to cover it.'

'I can't afford to spend any of my own money on a car,' I said. 'Whatever spare cash I can save from living expenses must be kept for the children's education. I would suggest that you help me with whatever you can spare. M.K. and Horace have offered to assist and if between you you can't raise 500 pounds I shall launch an appeal for



17. *Rickshaw Coolies waiting for business.*



18. *The Peak Tram.*

Hong Kong Again !



19. "Idlewild" in Seymour Road, mid-levels.



20. "The Falls" on the Peak.

subscriptions.'

'What do you mean?' he asked. 'You mustn't do any such thing. Leave the matter with me for a few days and I will see what can be done. How much do you need for a car?'

'Only five hundred pounds,' I replied.

'I will let you know in a day or so,' he said, 'but, tell me now, is the five hundred pounds to be sterling or Australian?'

I knew at once that I had gained my point or he would never have asked that question. When I called to say 'Good-bye', he handed me his cheque for five hundred Australian pounds: when the car arrived we named it *Roberta* after him.

So I tore myself away from my home and my people, and with a heavy heart, answered the call of duty in a strange land. On 21 September 1946 the MV *Nellore* left Hong Kong for Sydney and I met with kindness and comradeship on every side. Nothing was spared to make me more comfortable, nothing I fancied could not be found. I was a privileged visitor in the engine room, a regular member of the "mess" that examined the daily log. I had the Purser's office when I wanted to work; even the ship's best enamel would have been forthcoming had I chosen to use it to paint my nails; and I knew I had the Chief Steward's sympathy when together we wrestled with the many problems of "contraband". In such an atmosphere of kindly consideration, what could I do but to play my part? So, as we sighted Good Friday Island and threaded our way through the beautiful Whitsunday Passage, I had a feeling mounting to a firm conviction that far from merely losing all that I cherished and longed for, I was going to find happiness and contentment yet in my new home. Moreover, there were friends, too, in Australia who were waiting to welcome me - here indeed was the Promised Land.

## 13 THE STRUGGLE GOES ON

Although the voyage from Hong Kong was one of unmitigated pleasure, problems greeted me from the moment I arrived in Sydney. The first to be encountered was during the process of passport inspection when the immigration officer appeared to be unduly interested in mine. He turned over page after page as though he was looking for some entry that should, but did not, exist. Finally he asked:

'Are you spending any time in Sydney, Mrs Gittins?'

'As a matter of fact, I am,' I replied, feeling a little uneasy. 'Why do you ask?'

'I was wondering if you could call and see me at my office some time?'

'Certainly,' I said. 'I am going to spend a few days with my late husband's sister who lives in Rose Bay, and I am sure I will be able to fit it in. Is there anything wrong?'

'Oh, no!' he assured me. 'I should like just to have a chat with you.'

My uneasiness increased. Busy immigration officers simply do not spend their time "chatting" with incoming passengers. Something must be wrong. However he was not unpleasant as he suggested a time and, in due course, I presented myself at the Immigration Office in Sydney.

'When and how did you come to Australia, Mrs Gittins?' he asked, when I was seated in his office.

Replying, I said: 'It is not likely that I shall ever forget that day: It was 2 October 1945. I arrived on HMS *Vindex*.'

He nodded and indicated to me to go on.

"I had been interned by the Japanese in Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, for three years and eight months and, on release, had intended to wait in Hong Kong until I had news of where my husband was to be sent - he was a prisoner-of-war in Japan - before leaving to join the children in Australia. But the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, Mr Duncan Sloss, had heard rumours that he had not survived the rigors of a Japanese prison camp, and had decided that I should be with the children when I heard the news.

This view was shared by the Director of Medical Services. I had become a member of the Medical Department when hostilities

broke out in Hong Kong. This was because the University, where I was Secretary of the Faculty of Medicine, had been turned into a relief hospital in which I was automatically its Secretary. I was therefore also under the jurisdiction of Dr Selwyn-Clarke.

'At the same time, as the wife of a member of the HKVDC, I was the responsibility of the adjutant of the Hong Kong Volunteers and therefore classified as a dependant in the British Army. All three agreed that I should be sent to Australia by the first available evacuation ship which happened to be HMS *Vindex*.'

'But I met the ship myself,' the officer said, 'and I did not see you. Nor was your name on the list of passengers it carried. How do you account for that? Here,' and he handed me the list, 'you can see for yourself.'

I was staggered to say the least! Yes, there were the names of passengers, including that of Horner Smith, who I knew were on that ship, but my name was not amongst them! I was in a "jam" and I knew it. I forced myself to keep calm.

Of a sudden, I remembered something I was told in camp. It was when lists were being compiled, and arrangements made for a possible evacuation of women and children. Our neighbour, Mr Peter Pegg, who had been Deputy Director of Public Works, had asked if his wife, who planned to go to New Zealand, could travel with me. Naturally I replied in the affirmative on the assumption that the devil one knew was infinitely preferable to one who was a stranger.

Mr Pegg immediately said: 'Mrs Gittins, I have known you for a long time. In fact, I could claim to have seen you grow up.' (His house on the Peak was just above ours when I was a child.) 'May I give you a piece of advice?'

'Of course, Mr Pegg, but whether or not I shall act according to that advice is quite another matter.'

Ignoring my proviso, Mr Pegg continued: 'When you get to Australia, Mrs Gittins, don't forget to tell people who you are - that is, who your father is.'

'What has my father to do with it?' I asked.

'Life will be much simpler for you if you did,' he said. 'They are extremely class conscious down there - I know, because I have only recently returned from Sydney, having put young Peter into school in New Zealand. You will get all sorts of concessions if they knew that you were your father's daughter.'

'I certainly will not make use of my father in that way,' I said. 'If

they can't accept me for myself, they needn't accept me at all!"

'Well,' Mr Pegg promised, 'if you won't, I shall have to see to it that Bobby\* does.' As it turned out, Mrs Pegg and I did not travel together - that evacuation plan fell through. However, being in the difficulty that I now found myself, and seeing that there was no other way out, I decided to follow Mr Pegg's advice and make use of everything I had.

Turning to my interrogator I said: 'If you think that I was smuggled into this country, officer, you are quite mistaken. I will tell you exactly what happened and you can judge for yourself.'

I went on quite casually: 'All this happened only a year ago. Perhaps I did have preferential treatment. The Vice-Chancellor himself saw me on board and demanded that I should have cabin accommodation. He had been told that all "refugees", as indeed we were, were to sleep on camp stretchers made ready for them on the mess deck. I think that Mr Sloss must have seen that I was not well, for not only was I given the only single-berth cabin on the ship but the Surgeon-Commander was in attendance as soon as *Vindex* sailed early the following morning.

I recall that I had a high temperature which he diagnosed and treated as malarial fever. A steward was detailed to see to my needs - and he was as good as any professional nurse - until I was up and able to look after myself.

I had my passport with me, which is more than most internees had, and I joined the others in the Smoking Room, where all passengers had been assembled on *Vindex*'s arrival. Suddenly there was a message from the Bridge to say that *Vindex* had received orders NOT to proceed to Melbourne, where she was originally scheduled to call, but to return as soon as possible to Hong Kong.

There was such a crowd in the Smoking Room that I thought I would have the time to hurry down to my cabin to collect my belongings and still be able to join the queues. When I returned I saw only representatives from the Red Cross and the Department of Social Service - you were no longer there, and that is why I did not see you. As for my name not being on the passenger list, I can only suggest that someone forgot to put it there. All the others were from Stanley whereas I boarded the ship from Hong Kong where I had been working for the "take-over" Government. It is probable that it was compiled before they decided to send me, so that the omission was understandable. You might recall that Hong Kong had been occupied by the Japanese for nearly four years

and conditions were far from being normal when we sailed.

Although partially convinced, the officer was obviously still suspicious. It was at the time when Arthur Calwell was Minister for Immigration. His adherence to the White Australia Policy was rigid; and he was author of the famous *witticism*\*, aimed at Sir Thomas White in Commonwealth parliamentary debate, that "there are many Wongs in the Chinese community, but I have to say and I am sure that the honourable member for Balaclava will not mind me doing so - that two Wongs do not make a White".

'I believe what you have told me,' the officer said and, moving on to a different tack, he continued: 'But you mentioned preferential treatment. Why were you afforded preferential treatment?'

Obviously the catechism was to continue!

'I really wouldn't know', I said, 'except perhaps it was partly due to my being my father's daughter.'

'Your father, Mrs Gittins, who is your father?'

'You will understand that this is purely conjecture on my part. My father may be said to be one of Hong Kong University's benefactors. He is as well a member of its Court and he holds an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. He is also a British knight. Moreover, and perhaps most important of all, I was a member of the staff of the University and had been interned with the Vice-Chancellor and the rest of the staff in Stanley. It is therefore hardly surprising that Mr Sloss should take a personal interest in me.'

'You are partly Chinese, are you not, Mrs Gittins?'

'I am,' I replied.

'What percentage?'

I was taken aback. 'Oh, let us say 50 per cent.'

'Are you certain it is 50 per cent? Can you not make it a little less?'

'No officer, not 48 per cent or even 49 per cent but 50 per cent.' (In actual fact I could have made it somewhat less had I gone into details of family history but I had no intention of doing so for, by that time, I had become thoroughly annoyed).

'In that case, Mrs Gittins, I am afraid I shall have to report the matter of your irregular entry to the head of my department in Canberra. But do not distress yourself at this stage. They will contact you when they are ready to do so. You will most likely have to report at regular intervals to the Immigration Department in Melbourne. Meanwhile please carry on as if this interview had not taken place and thank you for coming to see me.'

\*Murray-Smith, S. (ed), *The Dictionary of Australian Quotations*, p.36.  
Heinemann Publishers Australia Pty. Ltd. (1984).

To do him justice, I should add that this immigration officer at least carried out his distasteful duty with considerable tact and remarkable courtesy. I was particularly grateful that he did not pursue the subject in the presence of the other passengers. Had he done so I would have been acutely embarrassed.

However, to return to my arrival and still feeling more than a little apprehensive, I entered the Customs shed for the inevitable baggage inspection. Here, too, I walked straight into trouble for, in spite of all the care and concern given me by the Chief Steward and officers of *Nellore* - they had inspected the entire contents of my suitcase and no one, including myself, had noticed the flat package at the bottom under the sheet lining the case - it did not escape the eagle eye of the Customs officer.

'Hullo! What have we here?' he asked.

'Oh, that is just a couple of fishlines I am bringing back as a gift for my children's dentist, Dr Sharpe. You see, he is a keen fisherman but he can't get these special lines here. When he heard that I was going to Hong Kong, he asked if I could get a couple for him.'

'Fishlines, eh? Don't yer know that fishlines - Japanese fish-lines at that - are prohibited import? They are classified as CONTRABAND!'

'I am sorry, officer. I did not know. Will they be confiscated?'

'That is for sure', he said. 'Yer may be prosecuted as well. Yer see, ignorance is no excuse for breaking the law. But it is not for me to say. Yer'd better wait until I have seen the boss.'

What a mess I was in! First, trouble with the Immigration Department - I certainly did not look forward to making regular visits to the Melbourne Office of Immigration: the very prospect made me feel like a common criminal on parole! And now, I was faced with the likelihood of prosecution by the Customs Department, and all on the day of my arrival. What an unfriendly country - it is obvious that I am not welcome here. Why in the world did I not take Grace's advice and stay where I was wanted? It hurt me particularly to think that in a country so hungry for migrants - there had been much talk of importing the illegitimate and unwanted children of German soldiers in Norway - the right of permanent residency to respectable people, simply because they carried in their veins a fifty per cent of Asian blood, was to be denied. It mattered not to this country that they were British nationals, nor that they were

families of deceased members of the Allied fighting forces. It was all I could do not to turn around and go straight back to Hong Kong.

But I was not prosecuted and I think, although I am not certain of this - it was, after all, 40 years ago - that even the fishlines were returned to me. If they had been returned they would have gone straight to Dr Sharpe when I reached Melbourne; but even he might not be able to remember, after this length of time, whether or not I fulfilled my promise of getting them for him.

Professor MacCallum, at least, was glad to see me. In my absence he had been invited to Perth to advise on a proposal to establish a medical school over there and, on his return, had written a long report\* which had been printed by the Western Australian Government Printer. I was particularly thankful to have been away when this was done as typing had never been my forte and the despatch of these reports was proving a heavy enough task.

I mentioned to the Professor that Mrs Scott must have been an excellent typist as she had done the report so expeditiously. His retort shocked me. I can still see him, standing on his bench reaching for a book from the top shelf. He made a half turn, saying: 'And that is about all she is!' What she had done in my absence to merit so harsh a comment I would not know - nor did I venture to ask him. I could only guess that I must not have imparted to her sufficient knowledge of the workings of the Department and she did not have, as I did, the advantage of having had previous experience in an academic institution. The comment was so out of keeping with his usual generous nature.

Having been away in Perth and then writing the long report on his return, Professor MacCallum's normal work had mounted up. Fortunately his term as Chairman of the Professorial Board and as Victorian President of the British Medical Association had expired but his duties as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine were multifarious and his chairmanship of the executive Committee of the Anti - Cancer Council, and other commitments besides, lay heavy on his shoulders. If he had a fault it was his concern for other people's problems and, whenever he was confronted with these, he would, literally, push aside his own work in order to devote his sole attention to unravelling theirs.

He asked me how I had enjoyed my leave and I could honestly tell him that it had been wonderful, that is, until I returned to Sydney.

'And there,' I said, 'I met with trouble from both the Customs and the Immigration Departments,' and went on to tell him all that had

\*MacCallum, P., Report to the Government of Western Australia on the Establishment of a Medical School in that State (1946), Government Printer (folio, 66 pp).

happened.

'I am certain you won't be further troubled by Customs. Once you have talked your way out they won't hound you. But I am not so sure about the other. They have strict immigration laws in this country and can deport anyone they might consider to be an undesirable immigrant - they could even deport me at any time should they choose to do so. All they would have to do is to give the person concerned a language test - usually in Gaelic - but if they do that to you, I will teach you Gaelic myself. In any case don't worry about them now and should they send for you, just put them off for a fortnight. Tell them we have examinations and you cannot be spared; that would give us time to stop them doing anything they cannot retract. The University will see to it that nothing unpleasant happens to you. However, to be on the safe side, I think you should go next door to see Professor Wright as soon as it is convenient for him to see you. He is very friendly with the Minister, you know.'

He telephoned Professor Wright and I went over and told him my story. He asked a few questions and said: 'Don't you worry about this at all, Mrs Gittins. When the time comes I will write to the Minister marking my letter "Personal and Urgent" and I am sure that all will be well.'

As I was leaving his office he called me back: 'Tell me, Mrs Gittins, what do your children look like?'

'Well, Professor, if you consider me foreign enough looking - and by "foreign" I mean non-Chinese, - to pass as an Australian, I assure you that my children are perhaps more foreign looking than I am.'

Professor Wright appeared satisfied. It seemed that a person's looks were all that mattered.

I heard nothing for almost a year and then I received a summons to attend the Immigration Department "bringing your two children with you".

On our way there I arranged with Elizabeth and John that, as soon as the preliminaries were over, they were to go ahead and wait for me in the Fitzroy Gardens, outside PLC. I could see no reason for them to be present at any discussion I might have with the immigration officer. On our arrival we were shown immediately into a small room in which, besides a desk and a chair for its occupant, there was a second chair for a visitor.

'Bring in chairs for Miss Gittins and Master Gittins,' the officer

said to the young clerk who showed us in.

'I wonder if you would excuse the children now that you have seen what they look like?' I asked. 'There is no reason, is there, for them to be present at any discussion we might have on racial discrimination? I have arranged to meet them later in the Gardens outside the Presbyterian Ladies College.'

'Of course, Mrs Gittins, if you prefer it. But there is no reason to be offended really. This is all a matter of form.'

When the children had left he continued: 'The University is very much afraid of losing you. We have received letters from the Vice-Chancellor and several of the professors and Professor Wright has written to the Minister himself. Of course we are delighted to welcome you into this country. You and your children are just the type of migrants we want. We have the Minister's word that you are free to stay for as long as you wish to do and, who knows, you might become Australian subjects some day.'

His random forecast was correct in one respect: Elizabeth and John have both taken out Australian citizenship although I have kept my British nationality.

And so I stayed on. For many years I still spoke of Hong Kong as "home" but, lately, I have come to regard Melbourne in this light. Forty years is a long time to be in a place and, Hong Kong? - it is not now the Hong Kong I knew and loved so well.

## 14 PROBLEMS ON THE HOME FRONT

In addition to the difficulties encountered in Sydney, I met with problems when I arrived home. Elizabeth had looked forward to my homecoming in more ways than one. She was naturally happy to see me but, thinking that it would mean an end to her being a boarder at school, she was disappointed to find that I had planned otherwise.

I had given the matter a great deal of thought. To my way of thinking, since she was due to sit for her School Leaving Certificate examinations at the end of the year, it would be most unwise to have her studies interrupted as they would inevitably be were she to come home to live. There would undoubtedly be loss of time spent in travelling to and from school, besides which, because of her helpful nature, she would take over more than her fair share of household chores. There would certainly be other interruptions.

Unfortunately she had become rather unsettled at school. She was tired of studying, she said, and being determined to begin earning her own living, she did not care whether or not she passed her examinations. She had been told, she confessed, that banks liked to take in girls at fifteen years of age to train as clerks, and she did not want to lose her opportunity. I realised of course that her main reason was one of a shortage of pocket money. I made her an allowance of a pound a week which was really more than I could comfortably afford but, in a school such as PLC, where most of the boarders came from families of wealthy primary producers, the amount was far from adequate to make her feel on equal terms with her peers. I remember once when I had had them both home for the week-end and they were about to go back to school, I handed them their allowances. Elizabeth, as usual, indicated that it was less than she had hoped for, whereupon John offered to forego his so that she could have more - he said he did not really need the five shillings. Carey, at that time, catered for boys who came from parents of more moderate means and John, who was of a careful disposition, did not feel the pinch as much as Elizabeth did.

I felt truly sorry for Elizabeth but, at the same time, I was shocked and disappointed at her attitude towards her further education. I had set my heart on her going on to University and especially as I had such happy memories of my own student days, I

wanted a similar opportunity for her. I stressed to her that, as she well knew, both her father and I had planned that she should have a University education and had, in fact, opened a savings account for that specific purpose from the time she was born; but whatever argument I brought forward, Elizabeth would not be convinced and, at my wits end, I sought the advice of Miss Neilson, the Principal of PLC.

'As I advised you before, Mrs Gittins, it would be criminal for Elizabeth not to go on to the University,' Miss Neilson said over a cup of coffee. She had again invited me to dine with her when I telephoned to ask for an appointment because I was concerned about Elizabeth; but she would not discuss my problem until we had eaten. 'It is always better to view these matters with something inside you,' she said companionably.

Continuing, Miss Neilson forecast that Elizabeth was bound, not only to pass her examinations, but would do sufficiently well to qualify for a Commonwealth grant, 'so there will be no question of an additional expense to you; and it does not matter in the slightest what course of studies she takes when she gets there - she will do equally well in the Arts or the Sciences. I am certain that it is only her anxiety not to be a burden to you that prompts her to act in that manner. I am glad you have decided to keep her in school as a boarder. It is indeed important that her routine should not be interrupted'.

And so Elizabeth stayed on at school, passed her examination, matriculated and qualified for a Commonwealth grant to go on to University, just as Miss Neilson had said she would. She elected to study for a bachelor's degree in the physical sciences which, being entirely ignorant myself of the subjects which the course embraced, I considered to be the most difficult in the syllabus, especially for a girl. But it was her own choice - according to her, physics and mathematics were the only subjects she could handle; English and literature were out of the question. Later, when I saw how hard she had to work, I did wonder whether I had indeed done the right thing in pressing her to go on, although I have always held the conviction, and I still do, that a University education is an asset which would qualify any girl to take her place in the community with confidence and dignity; it is also an asset which, whatever the future might hold, would be hers for all time.

I had my troubles with John, too. He had lately become very quiet - subdued might be a better word. I felt that there was some-

thing wrong, but could not lay hands on it. There had been some changes in the school, I realised. Mr Francis had left, so John had lost his friend Russell as well. And now they had a new Head who had come from Hobart and could not understand the boys' enthusiasm for football. Mr Francis used to let them go to the Grand Final as a group from the school - the new Head, deliberately, according to the boys, arranged for the School Sports to be held on Grand Final Day so that no one could go to the football and this had been a great disappointment to them all. Possibly the greatest blow of all was that he was no longer allowed to keep his bicycle in the Headmaster's garage as he used to do.

I offered to take him to a game some Saturday and he selected a match to be held at the Carlton Ground. The stands were very crowded as the match was between two of the top teams so we stood behind the back row of seats. When the whistle blew for half-time, John suggested that I should go to the Department and wait for him there. I thought that this was most considerate of him - I suppose he could see that I was getting very tired - and I was glad to accept his offer. The University was well within walking distance for him and I was really weary of trying to follow a game which seemed to me to be merely a wild scramble for the ball.

All this did not happen in a day and it must have been towards the end of 1947 after he entered the new boarding house that I realised he was nervous of his Housemaster. Because of our previous separation due to my having been interned, John had been allowed to come home every week-end. Now he would be hesitant to do so because when he asked permission, he would be met with: 'What, again?' and that would be sufficient to put him off asking.

However, one Sunday evening when I was taking him back to school, he confessed to having 'that awful feeling' in his stomach. It had been apparent to me that something was causing him some anxiety and I asked whether he was happy at school? 'Well', he replied, 'we are all rather afraid of the Housemaster. We have to remember to change from our shoes into slippers when we return to the boarding house in the evenings. If we forget, he would throw them out of the window and we would have to wear them wet the next day.' I thought to myself that I didn't know about the other boys, but John was most definitely in the throes of an anxiety complex.

Meanwhile in the Department a new Lecturer had appeared. Dr

Bill (W. McL.) Rose, a Nuffield Scholar, had just returned to Melbourne after having spent a year with the eminent Pathologist, Professor Mathew J. Stewart, at the University of Leeds in England. Dr Rose was a born physician, kindly and sympathetic. He took an interest in everything and everyone in the Department and was always ready to extend assistance or advice to anyone even before it was sought. He would always call at the office on arrival to have a few words with me, and to exchange news and views of mutual interest.

One day, without any apparent reason, Dr Rose asked if I intended John to come on to the University. 'It won't be for a long while yet,' I said, 'but I certainly hope that he will. Why do you ask?'

'Do you realise that you are not giving him the best possible education to prepare him for such an eventuality? Carey would be good enough if he were brilliant but, should he be of only average ability, he will not make the grade. Competition is very keen these days and, as a parent, you should be aware of this. You should send him to a public school.'

I pondered over this but did not act immediately. It was a big decision and, indeed, a most important step to take. I must not act hastily, I told myself. So, as usual, I set aside thoughts of the children to attend to duties in the Department.

I had returned from Hong Kong in time for the Supplementary Examinations. The Annuals had, as scheduled, been held in September and they had been 'a bit of a shambles', Mr Guthrie told me. His main concern was the matter of the boxes of microscope slides which had been hired out to the students at three pounds each. Many of the students had not returned their boxes and, even if their deposits were withheld, the amount in no way covered the cost of labour and materials to be spent on the preparation of further slides as each box held 140 sections of standard pathological conditions. 'What is more', Mr Guthrie said, 'some of the conditions cannot be replaced because we come across them so rarely. The Professor was very angry. He told me that I had to find a better system in future. You and I will have to put our heads together to find a way out next year.'

The Supplementary Examinations, however, ran smoothly and, immediately after these were over, we turned to preparations for the preliminary term beginning in early November for the next lot of students.

I had been allowed two junior assistants to replace Frieda,

which was a help, but it proved to be quite inadequate for all that had to be done. Life was very full and I would occasionally skip going over to the Staff Room for morning tea. This fact did not escape Professor MacCallum's notice and he pointed out to me that however busy I was I should try to get over because that was the only way I would be able to establish the fact that I was on an equal footing with the teaching staff. The situation would be a help to him also, he said, as they would then learn to come to me with any minor administrative problem instead of going directly to him. At the Christmas party when some of the wives joined us, he took me around to introduce me formally to them - he particularly wished them to get to know 'the new Secretary from Hong Kong', he said.

Before Christmas, though, there was the Melbourne Cup. On the morning of Tuesday 5 November everyone had been running around with tips and titbits of information about the forthcoming race. There was a Sweep and I was asked to buy a ticket. Without knowing the first thing about racing, or Sweeps, or the Cup, I bought a ticket. Then at a few minutes before 2.30 p.m. Professor MacCallum came into my office saying: 'Come on, now you are in Rome you must do as the Romans do - come and listen to the Melbourne Cup.' So I joined him and the rest of the Department in Mr Guthrie's room. It was a crowd but we all heard from a small mantel radio which Mr Guthrie had brought in from his home how "Russia" ridden by D. Munro won the 1946 Melbourne Cup.

In May of the following year (1947) an unexpected phone call from Leo told me that the car was ready and if it suited me, I could have it delivered to the University within the hour. I was naturally overjoyed and rushed in to tell Professor MacCallum the good news. 'Splendid! Splendid!' he said. 'I thought it was not to be ready until September.' 'So did I', I replied. And then reaction set in and I began to panic. What if I had forgotten how to drive, or how to change a wheel? Billy had taught me years before, when I used to drive up and down the Peak late at night or early in the morning. And what if I had engine trouble or ran out of petrol or anything at all - I felt so alone and helpless in this strange country - I had badly wanted a car - was in dire need of it but the very thought of all the responsibilities involved in car ownership frightened the life out of me!

Professor MacCallum must have sensed something of this as it was *he* who took delivery. *He* checked the car tools - all were laid out on the floor of his office - and *he* asked all the necessary questions. All I did was to sign the delivery docket in a daze and

the car was mine - I suggested, out of gratitude and courtesy, that he might like to try driving it.

'Not on your life!' he said. 'I never drive any one else's car. And you should remember this. Don't ever let any one touch your car and you will have only yourself to blame if anything goes wrong!'

I remembered; and for years I would not even allow Elizabeth or John to drive it. I stretched a point with Stewart after he and Elizabeth were married, but that was some years later. As for myself, as soon as my hands held the steering wheel, I knew that my fears had been groundless.

We took things quietly as petrol was severely rationed. Leo told me I should have sufficient to use it for travel to and from work every day so all I could manage was to take first Elizabeth and then John for a drive around the suburbs on the first two Saturday afternoons. Dr Keith Bowden, the Stewart Lecturer, would give me a couple of coupons every so often. He was very kind. He even took John out fishing.

My most acute problem was yet to come. I had lived amicably with Mrs Cassin for over a year and the children really enjoyed coming home for their holidays. Mrs Cassin, who had derived so much pleasure from Grace's visit, now lavished her affection on me to a degree that was almost embarrassing. She suggested my addressing her as "Mother Cassin". She was good with the children, too, that is, when I was away at work, but I sensed her loneliness when deprived of my company in the evenings. She had a healthy appetite for news - spending her days reading every word of her *Sun* newspaper, and then scanning my *Argus* from cover to cover. Each evening I had to relate to her all that had happened in the University.

Two minor incidents brought matters to a head. In the Easter of 1947 both Elizabeth and John came home for almost a week. Mrs Cassin very thoughtfully went to her daughter's on the Thursday before Easter planning to return, she told me, on Tuesday morning. As both the children needed replenishments to their wardrobes, we decided to spend Easter Tuesday in town. I cannot now recall what it was that suddenly made us realise during our lunch that we had left open the back door of the flat! We had kept it open for John who had taken the rubbish down to the back yard but we had picked him up from downstairs instead when we left for town. It was of course too late to do anything about it so I decided to try to forget the matter and to face the music when I got home.

I need hardly say that relations were strained for days after that.

The second incident happened in July when PLC Boarders held their mid-term exeat. Elizabeth had invited a friend, Helen Oates, whose home was in Hamilton in the Western District, to spend the week-end with us; because Hamilton was 182 miles away, Helen would normally have spent her holiday at the school. This, too, seemed to upset Mrs Caffin as she spent the entire week-end shut up in her room whenever we were in the flat. Fortunately, we had the car by then, and if we were not out in it, we were washing it, so that not many hours were spent in the flat.

Mrs Caffin had earlier told me that one of her reasons for answering Mr Scott's advertisement on our behalf was because of our connection with Legacy. The other reason was because the advertisement had mentioned "a lady with a 15-year-old daughter at PLC", and it was PLC which had had special appeal - obviously she had not bargained for the fact that 15-year-old schoolgirls from PLC, which had many country boarders, often carried with them commitments not always foreseen. For my part, I realised that the time had come for me to move on.

Accordingly after Helen and Elizabeth were back at school I had a long talk with Mrs Caffin. Our stay with her, I assured her, had proved a marvellous stop-gap but the time had come for me to think more of the children. She was naturally disappointed at the thought of losing me but, being a reasonable person, she appreciated that I had a duty towards the children and accepted the situation without rancour. I gave her three months' notice, thinking I would have sufficient time to have a home of our own for the Christmas holidays. Little did I suspect how difficult that task would prove to be.

## 15 HOUSE-HUNTING AGAIN

I must have forgotten how difficult it was to find accommodation suited to our needs or I might have thought twice before giving notice to Mrs Caffin. At the same time, I was most conscious of the fact that, from the children's point of view, a home of our own was not only desirable but absolutely essential. The sooner I found one, the better it would be for all concerned.

However, as the weeks went by, then the months, and still there was no home in sight, I experienced once again the frustration that comes with fruitless endeavour - the despair that constant disappointment alone can bring. All friends were alerted, all were on the lookout on my behalf. I took *The Age* on Saturdays as well as the *Argus* and combed the "Houses to Let" columns for anything that sounded at all suitable. I spent a veritable fortune on postage stamps in answer to advertisements and anxiously waited for replies which seldom came. Some merely gave a telephone number and when, on occasions, I managed to get through, the most personal and downright impertinent questions were asked. As before, it seemed to be a crime to have to work - the objection being that I would need to have my washing on the clothesline at week-ends. But the fact of having an eleven-year-old son, even though he was quiet and obedient and boarded at school, was the greatest crime of all. 'But what about the week-ends and holidays?' would be the inevitable reason for objection. 'Oh, no. We couldn't possibly let the accommodation to you!' All that I had endured eighteen months before I now suffered again. Nothing had changed. On only one occasion did a possibility arise. There was a small house for sale at West Heidelberg. The purchase price was three thousand five hundred pounds. I cannot now recall how I came to know about it but someone must have told me and as I had been thinking in terms of purchase when renting seemed impossible, I mentioned the matter to Mr Adam. He very kindly went with Elizabeth and me to view this possibility.

The house was quite charming. It was small and compact with two bedrooms and a sleep-out, and being newly built of weather-board and painted a pretty shade of green, both Elizabeth and I fell in love with it. There was also a small garden. Even Mr Adam approved, in that he thought the purchase price would be within my means and transport to the University was reasonable. He

nevertheless advised me to think it over carefully before making a final decision.

Enthusiastically I telephoned Molly who seemed somewhat cautious when she heard where the house was situated and, once again, she and Leo took me to have a further look. Molly disapproved in no uncertain terms, not of the house itself, but of the locality.

'This is a Housing Commission area, Jean. You can't possibly live here!' she said positively.

'What is wrong with a Housing Commission area?' I asked. 'It seems to me to be a pleasant enough locality.'

I had never seen or heard of Housing Commission areas in my limited knowledge of real estate, and Molly's attitude appeared to me to be somewhat snobbish.

'Jean,' Molly explained, 'it is the type of people who live in places like this. They are not your type and you would not wish your children to grow up amongst them. Don't you agree, Leo?'

Leo hesitated before replying and in that hesitation I sensed that although he did not feel as strongly as did Molly, he too would consider it best that I should wait for something more suitable.

And so I waited - and waited - and that something never came. I was getting really desperate as we were well into October and I would have to leave Mrs Cassin's flat in a few short weeks. One afternoon, as I was in the middle of a particularly distressing conversation on the telephone, one of the part-time staff members came in to see the Professor. Dr Hicks was a pathologist who had just returned to Melbourne after a year's tenure as Senior Lecturer in Pathology in the University of Sydney and had joined our practical class. He could not help but hear the conversation that went on and when I had finished, he said: 'Don't let this upset you too much, Mrs Gittins. There are so many of us in the Department, surely we can help you.'

In the end it was Dr Hicks himself who came to my rescue. Having left Mrs Cassin at the end of October I had spent several weeks in a boarding house when he called at the Department to tell me that Dr Reid, Senior Lecturer in the Physiology Department next door to us, was shortly to leave for England and his house would be available at five guineas a week. It could be had on a twelve months' lease from December.

Five guineas a week was really more than I could afford but, coming out of the blue, the house was a godsend. My salary had

been increased to five pounds a week since the beginning of the year and, especially as I needed to have a home for the children's forthcoming summer holidays, I decided to take it.

Meanwhile with the growing conviction that it was quite impossible to rent or to buy a house, I had decided that building was my only alternative. Mr Adam was very much against the idea as he knew of the problems associated with home construction from the legal and practical points of view. He strongly urged me not to consider such a step. I went ahead nevertheless and bought a piece of land in the new and rapidly-growing suburb of North-Balwyn. To be quite truthful, I was really hesitant to act against Mr Adam's advice but I felt that since he had approved of my buying a house for three thousand five hundred pounds and the cost of building a new one, every one said, would only be in the region of three thousand pounds and would take no longer than a year to build, I failed to see the reason for his objection to my building my own. I decided to act immediately.

I sought the help of Mr Scott of Legacy and he introduced an architect, Mr Eric Hughes. A plan was produced, it seemed in no time at all, and submitted without delay to the building authorities for approval.

It so happened that Dr Reid's house was also situated in North Balwyn and, what was more providential, No.49, Fortuna Avenue happened to be well within walking distance of our block in Bulleen Road. This was a stroke of good fortune I had not expected. I would be able, literally, to watch our own house grow. At long last, my troubles seemed to be at an end.

Happily I took my plan over to show to Molly and Leo. Molly praised its merits as she saw them, remarking at the same time how wonderful it would be for us to have our own home.

'You know, of course, Jean, that this is an unsewered area?'

'Unsewered area? Whatever do you mean, Molly?' It was beyond my comprehension. I had never heard of such a thing.

'Jean, you must surely have seen the sheds in people's back gardens in the outer suburbs!'

'Yes, indeed,' I replied, 'and I have often wondered why so many people had them.'

'Well,' Molly explained, 'they are commonly known as "Little Houses" although I have heard one referred to elegantly as "A House of Ease". Some are built over large holes in the ground or "cesspits"; others, the "backyard dunnies", are served by a pan

system with weekly collections by a nightsoil man.'

'I couldn't possibly put up with that', I protested. 'But there is a water closet shown on the plan. Look, here it is.'

'That is for the future, my dear', Molly explained. 'The architect has to allow for the sewers which may be laid in twenty years' time.'

I was horrified. And this was the mid-20th century!

'Don't look so shocked, Jean', Molly laughed. 'You don't mean to tell me that there are no unsewered areas in Hong Kong? But there must be. What do you do in such cases?'

'We have septic tanks,' I replied. 'Even in Stanley where we lived in the prison warders' quarters and, indeed, in the prison itself, there were septic tanks. Life wouldn't be worth living without them, especially in the hot weather.'

'All I can say is that you people in Hong Kong must be made of money,' Molly concluded.

I telephoned Mr Hughes the next morning. 'I couldn't possibly live with a "Little House" in the back garden,' I said.

Mr Hughes gave a little chuckle. 'I wouldn't wish a "Little House" on you, Mrs Gittins. I have allowed for a septic tank in your plan.'

I moved into Fortuna Avenue early in December, in time to have the children when the schools broke up for Christmas. The house was new and clean and comfortable. It had three bedrooms, a lounge-dining room which led from a breakfast area extending from the kitchen, and a fair-sized bathroom. There was a small lawn with a flowerbed by the front fence and a large back "garden" with room for several beds for vegetables, a woodshed and clothes hoist over a weedy patch of grass. A narrow bed of mixed shrubs ran alongside the left hand fence up the drive as far as the front door which was on the side of the house. The footpath outside the front fence was as yet unsurfaced, which made it quite impossible, on account of the heavy clay soil, to drive the car into the grounds in wet weather. The front lawn was cut periodically as the need arose.

I don't think I realised what life would be without Billy until we moved into a house and actually experienced the situation. Never having had to cope with technical matters, I was completely at a loss to know what to do when problems arose in my new home.

With North Balwyn being so new a suburb, problems appeared soon enough. When the hot water service malfunctioned due to an

interruption to the gas supply or when the electricity failed for some unknown reason, I went into a panic, thinking that I had done something wrong to cause the fault.

Fortunately Dr Reid had left the management of his house to Mr John Fletcher of Fletcher & Parker, the real estate agents, and Mr Fletcher kindly looked in on us most Saturday mornings to see that all was running smoothly. He must have recognised that I had had little experience in running a house on my own and assured me that, if things went wrong, all I had to do was to telephone him and he would attend to the problem with despatch. I remember with gratitude how helpful he was when one morning just before Christmas Elizabeth telephoned me at the office to say that a window pane in the breakfast room had been broken. This might have proved a major catastrophe because the Christmas season in Melbourne usually meant the suspension of all such services for several weeks; but upon my ringing John Fletcher in consternation, he immediately responded by sending a carpenter and to my immense relief the window was boarded up until such time as a glazier could do a proper job. What is more, the work of the emergency carpenter and the subsequent fixing of the window was done at no cost to me.

Having a house with three bedrooms meant that I could have Mabel's two sons, Michael and Peter, who were at school in Sydney, over for their holidays. They were the first of the children to arrive and I met them at Spencer Street Station. John then came home from Carey and lastly Elizabeth to whom I gladly handed over the responsibility of running the enlarged household.

I found North Balwyn to be a pleasant suburb populated mainly by young families. Our closest neighbours, the Clarkes, lived opposite, and Mrs Clarke soon made herself known to us and offered help if needed. There was a vacant lot to our left, and on our right a new house was nearing completion.

Betty and Howard Chapman soon moved in and although Dr Reid's house was serviced with water, electricity and gas, it was some time, certainly a number of days, if not weeks, before all services were connected next door. Meanwhile the Chapmans worked like beavers, putting finishing touches to their house -

Howard, particularly, seemed to be toiling from early morning until late at night in a perpetual sea of mud endeavouring to level his property, lay out his garden and construct his driveway - all at the same time.

A shopping centre with all facilities was up a short hill leading to Doncaster Road, along which ran the North Balwyn tram to its terminus half a mile away. Fletcher & Parker occupied a strategic position at the corner, and with two butchers, a couple of grocery stores, a haberdashery, a greengrocer and sundry other stores, it was a market place which any small community would be glad to have at its doorstep.

All the stores were friendly and remarkably obliging, particularly Mr Stevens, the butcher, with whom I first came into contact. He recognised me at once to be a newcomer, rushing forward to serve me himself. He must have seen that I was at a loss to know what to ask for and suggested a couple of lamb cutlets which he offered to crumb for me. He asked if I liked lamb's fry which was not rationed. I hesitated because I did not know what he meant by lamb's fry. Mr Stevens explained that it was liver - sheep's liver.

'Oh, that would be nice,' I said. 'I can give some of it to the cat!' In Hong Kong we always fed our cats liver or fish - never meat. He asked where I was living and on being told that I had rented Dr Reid's house for a year and the cat had been left in my care, he remarked: 'Ah, I see. So you sit at one end of the table and the cat sits at the other end, I suppose?'

I was told later that lamb's fry was considered a delicacy and especially as it was not rationed, butchers served it only to favoured customers.

Even though I had said the wrong thing, Mr Stevens never held it against me; and when Elizabeth joined me and we became his regular customers, we used to let him have our order in advance and he would look out for us and run out with the parcel as we passed on our way to the University so as to save us getting out of the car. I would then put the meat into the refrigerator in the Centre Lab together with the operative and autopsy specimens awaiting attention, retrieving it only when it was time to go home. Once, when I had to work late, I took it out of the refrigerator and left it in the Professor's room so that I would not forget it later. I always left the Department through the Professor's room, partly to check that the lights and gas radiator were extinguished and partly because his door was the only one at that time to be equipped with a Yale lock. I then went over to have a meal at the staff dining room before continuing with my work. I returned only to find that the rats had helped themselves from the parcel and meat was scat-

ered all over the floor and bench tops. I even found bits of meat on the Professor's desk!

We attended divine service at St. Paul's Cathedral on Christmas Day and then went, as usual, to Mr and Mrs John Adam's for Christmas dinner at midday and to the Webbs in the evening. John was a boy scout in those days. He was scheduled to join the Pan Pacific Jamboree of Scouts held at "Yarra Brae", the property of Sir Lewis Clifford at Wonga Park from 29 December and was to be away until 9 January (1948). Peggy Wardell and I visited him on New Year's Day. Parents had been requested not to give the boys too much money to spend and John seemed happy enough with what he had. Knowing that he would doubtless have unexpected expenses, I gave him another pound.

Elizabeth, too, was away from early January, fruit picking with her friend Yoland Walker at their home and pear orchard in Ardmona. She returned brown and happy with a case of apricots which we had to pick up from Camberwell railway station. The Walkers later sent a case of pears when they were ripe.

I took Michael and Peter for a drive to Warrandyte which I regarded as one of the nicest drives around Melbourne. I thought they should see something of the country. They didn't seem too keen to go and took their books along with them. They read all the way there and all the way back. After this I left them to their own devices.

Elizabeth suggested and I agreed that whilst we had Michael and Peter with us, it might be prudent to lay in a stock of firewood for the winter. John Fletcher also agreed that it would be a good idea and gave me the name of a wood merchant from whom I was to order half a ton of "split" box, a type of eucalypt, to be delivered on a Saturday morning.

It arrived quite soon, which was surprising in itself. The driver came to the front door: 'Where d'yer want it?' he asked.

'Where do I want what?' I asked in reply. 'It', as far as I was concerned, could mean anything.

'The wood,' he said. I went out with him to see if it would fit into the shed.

'Where is the wood?' I asked, thinking that he had unloaded it.

'In the truck. Can't yer see it?'

'I don't see any wood.' I was expecting to find pieces of wood, possibly bound together, as was done in Hong Kong, piled on the lorry.

'There's a 'alf ton of wood there - can't yer see them logs?'

There were six huge logs standing in the lorry - I didn't know what to say.

'Come on, make yer mind up, I 'aven't all day,' he prompted, and when still I did not reply, he said: 'I'll just run the truck up there vacant lot and tip 'em over the fence.'

And there the logs lay, higgledy-piggledy by the fence just as they had tumbled out of the truck.

I tried to get the boys to tidy them up and perhaps chop a couple of logs but they couldn't even move them, far less get an axe into them. They managed to get one log to stand on its end and Michael wielded the axe. It got nowhere and I left them in disgust.

A little later - it must have been with a supreme effort - Michael managed to get the axe wedged into it but he couldn't pull the axe out. I went out again to see how they were getting on only to find Michael holding on to the log, and Peter and John jumping on the axe handle, still in an effort to free it. So the axe was left firmly wedged in the log until Dr Reid's brother called one morning to see how we were getting on. He managed to free the axe, promising to return the following Saturday when he axed the whole lot whilst the boys piled up the pieces, some in the woodshed and the rest against the fence.

There were several visits from the relatives in Hong Kong. Two of the Lo children - Rita and T.S. (Tak Shing) - spent a month of their summer holidays with us. Rita hadn't been well and M.K. was always one to advocate a sea voyage as a panacea for all problems in regard to health. We were not able to do much with them since it was in the middle of our winter. The weather was very cold and there were not many hours of daylight. I decided to arrange a holiday for them at Warburton and as soon as I knew they were on their way made a booking at the Sanitarium where I knew there was tennis and golf and a heated swimming pool.

They enjoyed themselves thoroughly but before they arrived we had some excitement in Sydney. I had arranged for my friends the Horner Smiths to meet them and put them on the train to Melbourne. Somehow another friend, Jessie Wong, who had tutored T.S. during the War when Rita was in China with Grace, heard about their arrival. She, too, met the ship before Pat and Horner found them. T.S. told his sister that this was Auntie Jean's friend and so they left the ship with her. Poor Pat was in a panic as one would expect her to be. I cannot now recall how the problem was resolved. Rita must

have realised that things were not as they should be and all ended well.

T.S. was a very sensitive lad and, because Rita dressed in Chinese clothes and was somewhat conspicuous, he didn't like being seen with us. People stared, he said. I remember one day when I had been very angry with him in the morning, we took Rita into town without him. He decided he would light the fire to welcome us home. I never knew what he did - I did not ask - but the house was filled with smoke when we returned. We had to open all the windows which made the house colder than ever.

It had been a great pleasure to have them and I am sure Rita's health benefited from the change of air but the effort of keeping a jump ahead of T.S. kept me on my toes all the time. I must admit to being quite relieved when I was able to send him home without mishap.

Ever since I moved into Dr Reid's house, I had felt that, in spite of my feelings towards Mr Clucas, now that we had a home of our own, I should at least invite them over for a cup of tea. When I telephoned them after Rita and T.S. had gone home I found that Mr Clucas had died some time before, whereupon I asked Mrs Clucas if she would like to come and see us.

By this time the days were lengthening and spring was definitely on its way, we arranged that I should call for her one Sunday for afternoon tea, after which she inspected the garden.

I had spent the entire Saturday before tidying it up and was really quite proud of my efforts, so I was not surprised, and yet I could feel myself blush with modest pride, at Mrs Clucas's praise.

'Dear me', she said, 'what a nice tidy garden. I can't see a single weed anywhere. I don't know how you do it!'

I think she appreciated being asked and when I drove her home, I felt that I had somehow repaid in some measure the debt I owed them for having given the children a home in the interim period between Mrs King's departure and my own arrival in 1945.

Mabel came in late October, just after all our examinations were over. By then spring had come and the weather, if not raining, was truly lovely. We were able to do a couple of trips. It was, however, a busy time in the Department as my attention had to be directed towards making preparations for the new term which began in November. By that time I had three assistants, one extra one having been added nominally to do Dr Lowe's work but she was actually under my direction.

There was usually very little to be done on Saturday mornings except that the telephone had to be manned and someone had to be in attendance in case of callers. Professor MacCallum (and Frieda) were very insistent on this and I suggested that the girls should take it in turns to come in so that it would mean only one Saturday in three. This compromise had gone on for some months and seemed to be working smoothly when suddenly no one wanted to take a turn at all, so I went in instead.

The Professor was very annoyed at that. He said he intended to take the matter into his own hands, warning me that I might be placed in a situation in which I would have no help at all. I replied that I was not getting much co-operation in any case and I thought that he should do what he thought best. When the following Friday came and the problem recurred, he sent for all three girls.

I never knew what happened at the interview but they all left. I wasn't too sorry and, fortunately, Mabel was able to help bridge the gap. She even managed to type the pathology reports from my shorthand.

We advertised, of course. Betty Hollingworth applied and was immediately accepted. She proved to be intelligent and entirely reliable and had a pleasant personality besides. She worked with me for several years and left only to be married. After Mabel came Thelma Jones of Benalla - for a week-end. It was election time and she took me to the Liberal Party Club in the city to watch the counting of votes.

The excitement there was infectious, with everyone talking at the same time and Mr (later Sir Robert) Menzies simply exuding goodwill. He stopped by to have a few words with Norman Jones. Thelma interrupted to tell him that she had a friend from Hong Kong who was 'simply dying to meet the new Prime Minister!'

'I am not Prime Minister yet, you know,' Mr Menzies smiled broadly as he greeted me. I must admit to being thrilled as I took his hand. He certainly had a most engaging manner coupled with a remarkable personality.

Whatever was troubling John seemed to increase in intensity. He seldom came home for the week-ends now unless it was at an exeat. One Friday evening when he was due early the next morning he telephoned me in great excitement to say that he would not be home until noon because at long last he had been selected to play in a football match.

He did not want me to pick him up as he was not sure what

time the game would finish. He would take the tram, he said. I watched out for him and as he came down the hill from Doncaster Road, I could see, through the heavy drizzle, that he seemed very dejected.

'Well, John,' I said, 'did you have a good game?'

'I didn't play,' he replied ruefully. 'I was only a reserve.' He had had to stand in the rain waiting. He was soaked. As soon as it was possible I made an appointment to see the Headmaster who explained that John was unfortunately at an awkward age. He was too old for the "under twelves" and too young for the "under thirteen". 'It would be difficult for him to get into a team,' the Headmaster said.

Bill Rose's words came back to me. 'You should send John to a public school', he had said.

Professor MacCallum was very busy and I had no right to worry him but I did not know how to begin to get John into a public school. When I eventually approached the matter, the Professor said: 'Dr Rose is quite right. John has been at Carey for too long. Now, let us see where you can send him. I suppose you would prefer Scotch College, would you not?'

I replied that I would do whatever he suggested. He at once pushed aside all the correspondence he should have been attending to and telephoned Mr (later Dr) Gilray, the Headmaster of Scotch College.

Mr Gilray was sympathetic but said that he was unable to help because they did not even have room for their own boys coming on from the junior school.

Nothing daunted, Professor MacCallum said: 'We must try Geelong Grammar then. I know that they have had some trouble recently but that is all over now. As you know, I sent my Peter there. It is a little far away but it is an excellent school. We won't telephone this time - it was a mistake to have rung Mr Gilray as that didn't give him the time to think the matter over. I will instead write to Dr Darling and enclose a note from you setting out all the details of your husband's war service.'

Dr Darling replied in due course. He said that they did not have room either but, in view of the special circumstances, they would make room for John.

And so it was that arrangements were made for him to transfer to Geelong Grammar School the following February (1949).

Although John himself was unhappy at the thought of having to

face a new situation, he accepted it. He was most fortunate in having as Housemaster, Mr C.W. Dart, who encouraged the boys in outdoor activities and John developed a life-long interest in birds. He joined a group of bird-watchers who were allowed to camp each spring from Friday afternoons at the You Yangs, a nearby bird sanctuary, so long as they returned to school in time to attend chapel on Sunday evenings. John never looked back.

Meanwhile the lease of Dr Reid's house was running out, when John Fletcher came one morning to let me know that Dr Reid had taken ill in England and would be returning sooner than expected. This co-incided with a renewed state of mental anxiety on my part which had increased as the months went by. In spite of John Fletcher's moral support I began to dread the thought of having our own house with all its attendant responsibilities. The interest with which I had watched the Chapman's progress with their new house had turned to consternation at the endless toil that seemed to be their lot. Dr Reid's house was fully equipped and had a well established garden, and yet I found little time to tend to my small vegetable patch and to keep the weeds down elsewhere. Even though I was encouraged by the expectation of young beans and dwarf peas almost ready for the table, I did not know how I was to find the time to do anything more than that in a new house with an unmade garden. Above all, the wisdom of Mr Adam's opposition to building my own house now struck me like an avalanche: I should have listened to him instead of plunging in so headstrong a manner into such a wild and ambitious venture. I realised that I had only myself to blame.

It would have been better for me had I been able to refrain from thinking but the more I thought, the more worried I became. Finally I arrived at the decision that I would have to pull out before it was too late. So I withdrew my building application and sold the land. I determined to pack up as soon as the Christmas holidays were over and, admitting defeat, I would go home.

I felt very bad about deserting the children and was sorry to have to leave Professor MacCallum but I told myself that were I not to do so, the struggle for existence in Melbourne would most certainly have been disastrous to my mental health.

I wrote to M.K., speaking of my plans and almost immediately there came a letter from Mr Sloss, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, saying that Council had decided to set up an office for the clinical departments in the Queen Mary Hospital

and as he understood that I was thinking of returning to Hong Kong, he would like to make me the offer of a position to take charge of that office. This was just the spur I needed to arrive at a final decision. I wrote to Mr Sloss that I would be available in February (1949) after John had started at Geelong Grammar and Elizabeth had gone into residence at University Women's College.

Something then happened which caused a complete reversal of my plans. Going home at dusk one day, on her way from the tram, Elizabeth was accosted by a man and, although she extricated herself from a frightening situation with creditable presence of mind, I was most unhappy about it. What alarmed me was the fact that she had run into our empty house instead of going to one of the neighbours. 'Don't be absurd, Mother' she had said. 'How could I make a fuss over a thing like this? In any case it was quite unnecessary. I was able to take care of myself.'

They say that to know nothing is to fear nothing. Although I did not know much, I feared that a further episode might not have so happy an ending. I realised that, had I not been in Melbourne, Elizabeth would have had no one to whom she could turn. I considered this to have been a sign from Heaven which I could not afford to ignore. Elizabeth needed me more than she knew. In fact, if anything should happen to either of them whilst I was in Hong Kong, I would find it difficult to forgive myself. Travel in those days was not as easy as it is now.

Overnight I cancelled my plans for going home. I could not, however, retract from the sale of the land. So rapid had been the growth of North Balwyn that, in a few short months, I was able to sell at a profit of fifty pounds but, with the cost of architect's fees, a sum of twentyfive pounds was lost on the project. Mr Adam laughingly said that I had paid dearly for my little game. I, on the other hand, felt it was a small enough price to pay for the preservation of my mental stability.

I was, however, on the hunt for accommodation yet again but this time I had the help of John Fletcher. He soon found us a flat in a gracious old house in Kew, which is a highly-rated residential suburb. The house had been built by Judge Richardson but the present owners were Mr and Mrs Armon, who lived in it with their son. Our flat was at the back of the upper floor. Its rooms were spacious with high ceilings, and the windows looked out on an English garden with delightful herbaceous borders and fine old trees; a flight of wooden stairs led to its entrance.

In setting up our new home we needed certain essentials. Through John Fletcher, an offer was made by the previous tenant for us to take over the curtains and floor covering of the spacious living room of 18 feet by 30 feet and the bedroom which measured 15 feet by 18 feet. The curtains were of a medium-blue cotton brocade and lined, and a good quality red feltex covered the floors. As a result of the war, carpet was still unobtainable at that time.

The offer was gladly accepted; but I had yet to consider replacing the linoleum in the kitchen as well as floor coverings for the two smaller rooms, one of which we were to use as a breakfast room and the other a room for John. The large bathroom, with its old-style fittings standing on a rather cracked linoleum-covered floor was, after a good scrubbing, left as it was.

The only furniture we had was John's bed which Mary King had bought for him when they went to Clucas in Camberwell; but we needed much, much more, besides pots and pans and other equipment for the kitchen.

I did not, however, possess anything like the ready cash that would be required for this sort of expenditure. I had also a horror of running into debt, although a loan could possibly have been arranged with the bank. I decided against that and, as a consequence, my only alternative was to sell some asset.

Unfortunately I did not have much in the way of disposable assets either; but on my return from Hong Kong in 1946 I had brought with me what remained of my jewellery after much of it had been sold on my instructions in one of the rare messages I was able to get out, to pay for food parcels to be sent in to Billy and myself in the camps. I remembered that when I was married my mother had persuaded me to use a fair portion of my dowry on good jewellery which I had never been very keen on owning, but which, she said, I should have because good jewellery never lost its value. How right she was!

My mother had died suddenly early in 1938 during an attack of acute asthma. A short while before, and unknown to anyone, she had cancelled a previous legally prepared Will and had substituted a very simple document, which was respected as her wish and in which she had left all her money to the upkeep of the Buddhist Temple and Free School for Girls, the building of which had been her main interest during the last ten years of her life. She hoped, she stated, that Father would go on supporting her life's work, which he would naturally have done, if and when her money ran

out. As far as her jewellery was concerned, she left this to "my children and grandchildren".

I remember my sisters and I packing all her jewellery into boxes prior to having them stored in the safe deposit vaults of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank and nothing short of a global war would have induced any one of us to have touched them. But during the Japanese occupation, and whilst I was in Stanley (this is as far as I could gather after the War), the boxes had been taken out by members of the family still in Hong Kong. Their entire contents had been valued and divided into lots which were drawn and replaced in safe custody until such time as they could be claimed by the relevant members concerned - that is, her "children and grandchildren". The lots for myself (other than what had been sold and used for food parcels) and those of the children were handed over to me and I brought them back to Melbourne where, under the direction of Mr Adam, they were valued by the Atlas Insurance Company, insured and once again placed in a safe deposit box in the E.S.& A. Bank situated at the corner of Queen and Collins Street.

I now decided to sell some in order to set us up in our new home. I should not have said anything to Mr Adam but quietly gone ahead to raise the amount needed by selling some of the jewellery. I was, however, so accustomed by that time to obtaining his permission - perhaps I should really say, advice - before I made any important decision, that I did tell him of my intention.

Mr Adam at once said: 'You can, of course, do as you wish with your own inheritance; but you should not act hastily with regard to those of Elizabeth and John, which have only been placed in your trust. Remember that you only hold these *on their behalf* and were you to sell without their knowledge or consent, you would be betraying that trust.'

'But don't you see, Mr Adam, these things were not left specifically to Elizabeth and John by my Mother. They were only small items and a vague interpretation of what she had meant. It would be quite a different matter had she left an itemized list of whom she wished to leave certain things to. I would have respected that. As a matter of fact I remember her telling me that the value of jewellery was permanent in the way that it could always be turned into cash when one was in need. We are indeed in need now and I am certain that she would approve of my using her inheritance to the children as well as my own to help us in our present difficulty.'

I did not for one moment think that I managed to convince him that the situation in our case was somewhat different to what a normal trust must mean in his legal opinion but I went ahead and sold what was required just the same. Very much to my regret I parted with my beautiful solitaire blue diamond stud earrings to a city jeweller for five hundred pounds; but I told myself that it was in a good and certainly justifiable cause, and I accepted it philosophically as one further sacrifice I was forced by circumstances to make on the altar of the God of War. In return we had the pleasure of living comfortably in the flat for nearly four years, until the Amsons wanted it back for their son, who was to be married. But I still have some of the furniture as well as the diamond from my engagement ring which Billy's sister, Mabel, later had set for me into a brooch, using a piece of gold from her mother's legacy to me, and a necklace of natural pearls, a present from my parents which I wore at my wedding.

The one thing that neither money nor jewellery could buy was a telephone. I had been fortunate in that Dr Reid's house was equipped with this facility and, before that, there had been a public call box close by Mrs Casslin's flat. However, pleasant and comfortable as it was in the Kew flat, it did not have a telephone nor even one that was close by. But Professor MacCallum decided to go fishing with Mr Walter Bassett in his boat for a week or ten days during the Christmas break. He said he would telephone me each evening at seven o'clock in case anything turned up to require his urgent attention.

I remarked that I would have to remain in the office until that time to receive his call because, although I had applied for a telephone when we moved in, I was told that, because of post-war shortages, it would be six months before one could be installed.

'We must do something about that,' the Professor said. 'Put in a further application and I will add a covering letter pointing out the important nature of your work in regard to the pathology service to doctors and especially to the country hospitals' (which, at that time, did not have their own).

A telephone was installed within a few days of the application being sent. Six months later another technician appeared in response to my original request for a telephone. He could not believe, until I showed it to him and he had tested it, that one had already been installed in the flat.

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It was the second day of January and the first thing Professor MacCallum did when he came in was to ask me to do a letter to the Vice-Chancellor, Sir John Medley. He was in his sixty-fifth year, the Professor wrote, and this being so, he wished to give formal notice of his retirement on 31 December 1950.

Everyone knew and expected this because it was customary at that time for the University to follow Government practice to require men, from the Vice-Chancellor down to the most junior clerk, to retire at the end of his sixty-fifth year. For women, the retiring age was sixty years.

Professor MacCallum had made no secret of his age. I had been dreading his retirement because speculation was rife as to who would succeed him. All opinion, however, had pointed to one E.S.J. King. Mr King, as he was then known, was one of the leading, if not the leading, surgeons in Melbourne at that time. At the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 he had given up his practice to join the AIF and, as Lt-Colonel in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps, he had seen service in the Middle East, Egypt and New Guinea when his health broke down. He was forced to spend the better part of the next two years in the Repatriation General Hospital at Heidelberg. He was said to have been a very difficult patient - the only visitor he welcomed was Professor MacCallum, who called each Thursday forenoon to fulfil his commitment as Honorary Consultant Pathologist to the hospital, and visited him at the same time.

On his discharge in 1947 Edgar King was forced to give up surgery and, turning to his second love, pathology, he succeeded Dr Wright Smith, who had died suddenly, as Pathologist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

From then on he was a frequent visitor to the Department where he appeared to have taken an instant dislike to me. I used to feel that were I a fly on the wall he would at least try to swot me (he hated flies). As it was, he simply ignored me. There were, I think, two reasons for this: first, he disliked women in general and secondly, he objected to having to come through me instead of marching straight in when he wished to see the Professor. Professor MacCallum, however, was most insistent that he should do as everyone else did; the reason being that, having two doors to his

## A STRANGER NO MORE

office, he could have someone else with him at the time when Mr King called without notice.

By this time, the establishment of the Department had reached its full strength. Dr Allan Pound, having finally been discharged from the Army, was no longer required to wear uniform, as he had done for the first months of his tenure in 1946. Dr Keith Bowden, Pathologist to the City Coroner, held, concurrently, a part-time appointment as our Stewart Lecturer. The dental students were his special charge. They spent Thursday afternoons with us; the rest of their time was taken up with other subjects taught in the Australian College of Dentistry in Spring Street. Dr Bowden retired at the end of 1948, presumably to spend more of the spare time he gleaned from his work at the City Morgue to devote to his study of the life of George Bass. We did some of the typing of the manuscript in the office and on the publication of the book in 1952 he gave me a copy.

Dr Bowden was succeeded by Dr Bill (W.E.) King, a leading consultant physician in Collins Street who was already on the part-time staff. Dr King possessed all the qualities that go towards the making of an outstanding physician. His untimely death from cardiac failure in 1952 was a great loss to colleagues and friends alike. The attendance of mourners at his funeral service in St. Paul's Cathedral was mute demonstration of the esteem in which he was held.

Dr Carl de Gruchy was Beaney Scholar. The positions of Beaney Scholars were created in 1908, as full-time demonstrators, from a bequest in the will of Dr J.G. Beaney to provide for senior scholarships in Pathology and Surgery but, with the depreciation in currency over the years, the scholarship in Pathology provided for only a part-time demonstrator in his first year of graduation.

Other part-time staff consisted of senior physicians and surgeons who wished to retain their association with the Department. As well as Bill King these included Drs Bruce Robinson, and "Weary" (later Sir Edward) Dunlop, and Ian Stahle, who are still personal friends, and many others. Some took the students for tutorials in the Museum, others helped in the practical histology classes where microscope slides were studied. The pathologists at the teaching hospitals also gave occasional lectures in Special Pathology and shared in the general teaching programme as well as giving autopsy demonstrations at the hospitals.

During these years there had been several changes in the full-

time staff. Dr Lowe left us in 1948 to take up the Directorship of the Baker Institute of Medical Research in the Alfred Hospital and Dr Pound acted as Senior Lecturer for the rest of the year until the position of Assistant Curator (the Professor of Pathology being *ex officio* the Curator) of the Harry Brookes Allan Museum of Pathology was created in 1949. The position had the status of a Senior Lecturship. Dr Heinz had been promoted to Senior Lecturer, with Dr Rose assuming the second Senior Lecturship when that was granted to us at that same time.

It was a busy and most exciting time. With Professor MacCallum's insistence that I should go across to the Staff Room for morning tea, I became quite well acquainted with most of the part-time members, and during the winter months, when the Museum felt so freezingly cold, many of them would be glad to come in to get a little warmth from my gas fire - at least when the supply of gas was not too restricted by the frequent industrial disputes. I recall particularly the kindness of "Weary" Dunlop who had been a prisoner-of-war in Java and on the Burma Railway, trying to get me transferred to an Australian war pension which was a great deal more than what I was getting from the British Army. The answer he received was that I would be eligible for an Australian pension only if I were to marry an Australian serviceman, whatever his rank, and he in turn died or was killed. They were not willing to be responsible for my pension - even though I had made my home here. I was nevertheless grateful to "Weary" for having tried.

When I joined the Department early in 1946, Professor MacCallum promised that the office accommodation would be improved; but University finances were low and it was possible that, with so many other matters requiring attention, Professor MacCallum had not really pressed his claim - that is, if he remembered to make his request in the first place. In spite of all its deficiencies, however, one stayed in the Department not because of what amenities it lacked but for what it was. As far as I was concerned, I continued to occupy Miss Davies's cubby hole and was too busy even to think of, far less welcome, any disruption to my well-filled days. My assistants had their desks scattered around the South Laboratory - bare boards notwithstanding - and no one complained.

Early in 1950, with barely a day's notice, workmen appeared to carry out the promised improvements. Perhaps my unexpected flood of tears when Mr Gray, the Clerk of Works, snapped at me

had speeded up his programme, I would not know; but the improvements were actually carried out.

A new partition was erected sectioning an area of approximately 12 square feet from the Laboratory for my office. This extended from the window ledge to the side of the cubby hole, with a doorway leading to the outer (assistants') office and another into the Professor's room. The rest of the ledge was removed, giving a fair-sized office for my assistants, retaining the line of built-in cupboards along the wall separating us from Mr Guthrie's room which formerly provided storage space for supplies used in the preparation of slides and other technical necessities. These cupboards were cleaned and polished and proved to be a great asset for our stationery and office equipment not in use at the time. The cubby hole was, as a consequence, freed for a much needed cloakroom for the office staff.

The necessity of knocking down the double brick wall leading into the Professor's room proved to be the only unpleasant part of the work and it took us many hours to clear the dust, even though the workmen had given the rooms a preliminary cleaning. New linoleum now covered the entire floor.

As far as I was concerned it was a great improvement. I now had adequate natural lighting from the huge plate glass window through which I could see something of the world outside. During cold winter days I could trace the lacy patterns of the elm tree by my window; in the summer months I enjoyed its shade.

I well remember the morning that Mr King's appointment to the Chair was confirmed. He had come over to the Department and there was general excitement as everyone wished to offer congratulations to the Professor elect. I hesitated as to whether I should join them for morning tea and after some thought decided to add my tribute to those he was receiving. It was only his due. He was gracious in his acceptance but I was nevertheless not reassured.

Sad and worried I confided my doubts and fears to Professor MacCallum, wondering whether I should seek a transfer to some other Department.

'Edgar King,' the Professor said, 'is a fine man, very fine indeed. You will find that things will be quite different when you work for him. He had a tough time, you know, throughout the war years and his severe illness at its end, brought great disappointments to his life. But he is nothing if not fair-minded. I think that you should

see him through for a year. You owe this much at least to the Department. Give him half a chance and I am sure that he will learn to appreciate you.'

I wasn't at all convinced. However, if Professor MacCallum considered that I owed it to the Department, the least I could do was to stay for the year. But I needed a holiday. I longed for a trip home.

The time seemed opportune from the children's point of view. John had settled in happily at Geelong Grammar. Besides other things, he was learning carpentry. At Christmas he had brought home some sturdy steps, painted a cream colour to match my kitchen. The next year he made himself some bookshelves.

When he came home for the school holidays, Elizabeth and I used to leave him the breakfast dishes, and the shopping list. He would get his own lunch and amuse himself in the afternoon - at times visiting his old Carey friends. A cheery fire would be lit when we came home in the evenings.

Once, when he was about thirteen, I had ordered a ton of firewood for the winter. This is usually dumped on the footpath, and I had hoped that the Amson's gardener might have been persuaded to help John put it away. When I came home there was not a sign that the wood had been delivered.

'Didn't the wood come, John?' I asked.

'Oh yes', he replied. 'It's been put away. Come and have a look.' I followed him into the woodshed which was set well back in the garden. He could hardly conceal his pride. The firewood had been neatly stacked in piles almost reaching the top of the shed.

'Who helped you, John?' I enquired.

'No one' was the reply. He had worked the whole afternoon and then had swept both the path leading to the shed and the footpath outside. The next day he confessed that his back 'didn't feel too good!' He had come a long way from the delicate mite who had had to leave Hong Kong because of his health.

Elizabeth was hard at work. She had accepted an assignment and strove to complete it. An exceptionally nice young man had appeared on the scene - Mrs Webb's nephew, Stewart Doery. He was very shy, very courteous and unbelievably thoughtful. I liked him immensely.

As the Professor's birthday approached Council conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate of Medicine and commissioned Max Meldrum to paint his portrait. His associates and staff, under the

leadership of E.S.J. King, planned to celebrate the occasion by presenting him with a volume of essays to be called "Studies in Pathology", the aim of which was 'to acknowledge his influence on many generations' and 'to indicate the breadth of outlook which, for over a quarter of a century, he has inculcated in the School'. The production of this book was a task of such magnitude as only someone of Edgar King's ability and drive could have accomplished. We others did only what we were told to do. It had been a busy time for us all.

But now there was a lull. The Professor was sitting for his portrait and the volume of essays was safely in the hands of the Press. Moreover the new term had been launched and the teaching programme was running without a hitch. It was a good time to take a trip home.

With Professor MacCallum's approval, I planned to take three months' leave. Qantas Empire Airways, as it was then known, had recently introduced a service to Japan via Hong Kong. I would go up by air and return by sea, allowing a stay of approximately ten weeks at home.

Arrangements for the children fell into place as soon as it was known that I was planning to be away for three months. Mr Dart assured me that John would be no problem from the school's point of view as he had made friends and would most certainly be asked home for the holidays. In Elizabeth's case, several friends had offered to have her and all I had to do was to arrange a roster. Then Dr and Mrs Rose suggested she should make her headquarters with them, visiting other friends at any time they might wish to have her.

And so it was settled. This was a great load off my mind and once again, as he had done so often in the past, big-hearted Bill Rose had helped me out of a difficulty.

I will here quote from *Eastern Windows - Western Skies*:

"My plane, a DC4, left Kingsford Smith Airport for Darwin on the evening of 28th March, 1950. The DC4 is a most comfortable and smooth flying aircraft and, after eighteen years, is still being used on Qantas's Norfolk Island run. The Sydney/Tokyo service was, at that time, a new venture - part of a large expansion programme by which Qantas had projected itself into the field of international civil aviation. They wished to create a good impression and all passengers were treated with the solicitude which, nowadays, would be reserved for VIPs. There were only a few passengers, among whom

was Mr Angus Mitchell, first Australian President of Rotary International. He was on his way up to Japan to foster postwar friendship. He was interested to know my feelings towards Japan.

He asked me: 'What do you think of the Japanese?'

'Do you really wish to know, Mr Mitchell?' I asked in turn.

'Yes, please,' he said.

'All I can do is to give a very trite reply. It is what we used to say in camp: 'The only good Jap is a dead Jap'.'

Needless to say, I received a lecture on forgiveness and on international goodwill.

To continue with my quote:

"A brief technical stop at Darwin early the next morning, with breakfast at the international terminal, and we were on our way over the Arafura Sea to Labuan in North Borneo. We were taken for a drive around the island before settling in at the comfortable rest house which Qantas had built for the overnight stop.

"It was a wonderful holiday, every minute of which I loved. The years had softened the loss which had saddened my previous homecoming. I was ready to throw cares to the wind and indulge in the sheer joy of being home. Father had been delighted with a second letter he had received from Professor MacCallum, written after my departure, telling of his appreciation of me. He gave a welcoming party to which he had invited all my friends. There must have been at least two hundred present. M.K. was approaching the height of his career. For his outstanding service in Hong Kong's rehabilitation programme, he had been knighted in 1948. Besides his own legal and other community interests, he was a member of both the Legislative and Executive Councils. He was kept busy with meeting after meeting during the day, and an incessant run of social engagements at night - to many of which the invitation had been extended to include me. Yet he gave me generously of his spare time. He loved to listen to accounts of the children's activities in Melbourne.

"Mr Sloss had retired from the University and Professor (later Sir Lindsay) Ride was now Vice-Chancellor. . . . He was an old friend. There were many others: the Gordon Kings; the Vice-Chancellor's Secretary, May Witchell; Jeanne Faid, my flat-mate in Stanley, now head of the Department of Mathematics; Robert Simpson, Professor of English, and a family friend of long standing; the Redmonds (Engineering); and Elaine Davis and her husband, Dave, now Professor of Geography. The University was like another home to

me. M.K. had them all to a champagne dinner on my birthday, at which were also Grace's husband, Horace; my sister Florence, and her husband, K.C. Yeo, who had become Assistant Director of Medical Services; Billy's brother, Victor; and his sister, Mabel, with her husband George Hall. Present also were Mr Justice Williams and his wife. He had been a prisoner-of-war with Billy and was Chairman of the Hong Kong War Memorial Fund. Both he and M.K. thought that I should apply for assistance from the Fund for John's education. It helped me until John left school.

"I attended the Annual Athletic Meeting of the University at the Pavilion where, on behalf of the children and myself, I presented to the Athletic Club, the Gittins Memorial Challenge Cup for the 440 yards event.

"The University was being visited by representatives of the Inter-University Council of Higher Education. Walter Adams, brother of my friend, Lionel Adams of Melbourne, had come with Dr Mouat Jones. I met them in the Vice-Chancellor's office. Walter Adams knew Grace in England. Introductions seemed superfluous. As I had the use of M.K. Lo's car, and plenty of free time besides, I was given the privilege of showing Hong Kong to our visitors. I drove them around the Island, visited Stanley and the Peak. *The Falls* had been cleared of loose rubble, but was still dreadfully war-scarred.

"Easter Sunday was spent in the New Territories, with lunch at Mabel and George's lovely *Beach House*, situated at 11-mile Beach, on the way to Castle Peak. After lunch we continued on the sixty-mile route around the New Territories, turning inland from Castle Peak, with its long beach, and Buddhist monastery half way up the mountain, to Sheungshui. Father had a property in this district where, before the war, besides growing fruit and crops under scientific conditions, there had also been an experimental farm for poultry and pigs. Since the re-occupation, the property had been taken over by the military authorities. We called on Major Churn who was our nearest neighbour. He was delighted to see us and gave us afternoon tea. We passed the Royal Hong Kong Golf Club's links at Fanling. This 36-hole course is said to be one of the world's finest.

"As we reached Taipo, we caught glimpses of the beautiful and sheltered waters of Tolo Harbour. This section of the Taipo Road, with its mountain ranges and islands rising out of a calm inland sea, is one of the most scenic of Hong Kong's many attractive drives, and hugs the coastline to within a few miles of Kowloon.

"Our visitors expressed a desire to see Macao and M.K. arranged bookings for us on one of the larger ferries that left Hong Kong each day. Situated 35 miles from Hong Kong, Macao is the oldest trading outpost of the west with China, the history of its association with Portugal dating back to the year 1557, although it was not until 1887 that it was ceded to Portugal as a colony. Macao's sheltered harbour, with heavy silting from the West River, cannot be compared to the mercantile facilities of Hong Kong but, during the Japanese occupation, it enjoyed for a brief spell the *entrepôt* trade that was Hong Kong's in normal times. The quaint settlement extends up a hillside and overlooks the fine, if muddy coloured, bay. We spent the afternoon exploring the old cathedral, with its historic graveyard, and the beautifully kept botanic gardens.

"Macao's colourful buildings display features of both east and west. As we strolled with leisurely interest along its cobblestoned streets, I was reminded of its similarity to Lisbon, which I had noticed when Father took me to visit the Portuguese capital in 1924. As the ferry was not due to return to Hong Kong until three o'clock in the morning, we hired a car after dinner to see Macao's night life, visiting several of the many *santans* houses, where fortunes may be made or lost in a few hours, and which give Macao its name of 'Monte Carlo of the East'.

"There was a formal dinner at Government House, at which His Excellency (Sir Alexander Grantham) asked me many questions about Australia and was greatly surprised to hear that my friends had thought me foolhardy to visit Hong Kong when conditions appeared so unsettled. The Australian press had made headline news of the disturbances and general unrest in Hong Kong consequent upon the civil war in China. His Excellency asked if I would be prepared to broadcast my impressions on my return to Melbourne. He wanted Australians to have a true picture of Hong Kong. If I would do this, he added, he would make arrangements with the Australian Broadcasting Commission to give me a suitable time.

"As a comparison to what Hong Kong was like on my first visit in 1946, and of conditions prevailing at the present time, it might be of interest to take a brief look at the picture as I gave it over the national station, 3LO, in August, 1950. I told my listeners that I found Hong Kong to be normal and stable in everyday living. Government policy relative to its neighbours tended towards an

altruism which, to some extent, was against the interests of her own citizens: owing to its geographical situation and political balance in a sphere of trouble and chaos, Hong Kong had become a haven for all who had found living conditions untenable elsewhere. When Shanghai fell to the Communists in May 1949, as did Canton later in the same year, Hong Kong had opened its doors to the refugees who, at times, had reached ten thousand in one week. From the half a million inhabitants left by the Japanese at the end of the occupation in 1945, Hong Kong's population had exceeded the pre-war figure of 1,600,000, and now approached the two million mark.

"The resources of the Colony had been strained to breaking point. I could see that housing and water shortages, always problems, had become desperate. A host of the refugees were destitute and, in order to give shelter to their families, they had built themselves 'temporary' shacks and, almost overnight, squatters settlements had sprung up in every conceivable spot. These shacks were flimsy and insanitary, and constituted a grave fire danger as well as a serious menace to health. The problem was later to be countered by multi-storey economy housing blocks in recognized resettlement areas - a scheme that was as humane as it was far-sighted, and reflects great credit on the local Government.

"General housing difficulties were being overcome by reclamation of land for the construction of housing and building sites on hitherto rural areas; the high-rising multi-story residential flats, sponsored by private enterprise, were to come later. The water shortage, however, remained acute. In spite of new and larger reservoirs, Hong Kong's absolute dependence on its capricious annual rainfall to fill them, makes one wonder if this problem will ever be solved.

"Despite these difficulties, the influx of people from China had brought an upsurge of initiative and capital. There was a growth and prosperity such as had never been seen before. With the increase in population had come a heavy demand on consumer goods; widespread industrial development had taken place. Circumstances had therefore combined to change Hong Kong from its traditional role of a quietly successful storehouse, with small side industries, to become a growing centre of great commercial enterprise.

"I heard whispers of black markets and rents rackets - the inevitable result of supplies failing to meet the demand. In the

newspapers I read of crime and of corruption, yet statistics do not show a higher percentage of these in Hong Kong than elsewhere. The police force is doing a magnificent job. The tact and discretion with which problems have been handled, have won for its members the admiration of all...

"Enormous sums of money have been spent on public works. The airport is one of the busiest in the world, and plans for its expansion are well under way. The magnificent natural harbour, ranking as the world's fourth largest, continues to serve ships of all nations - its eastern approaches having recently been equipped with the latest navigation aids. The roads deserve special mention. They had been left in an appalling state of disrepair by the Japanese, but timely restoration and new developments, using modern construction techniques, have combined to make them a delight to the motorist...

"Recent Government Ordinance had given both labour unions and employers' associations a definite legal status and the newly-formed Labour Office is constantly engaged in the conciliation of trade disputes. Strikes are not unknown, but a surplus of semi-skilled labour acts as a deterrent to hot-headed action and, as far as I was able to ascertain, there had been no hold-up of shipping on account of a lack of labour to discharge or load ships...

"Now that I have seen Hong Kong for myself, I am firmly of the opinion that Great Britain has no thought of sacrificing her\*. Nor do I see any evidence of support for the suspicion that her neighbours contemplate a forceful occupation. What effects recent events in Korea will have on Hong Kong, I do not presume to forecast. I have tried to sketch you a picture of conditions as I found them; I know that Hong Kong would appreciate your understanding and support."

I had made two requests of my Father: the first was a suggestion for him to have the children up for their summer holidays at the end of the year, reminding him that he had not seen them for almost ten years. The second concerned a new car. I had traded in *Roberta* before leaving Melbourne, and had ordered a Hillman *Minx*, to be delivered when one became available. Waiting time for new cars in Australia was still many months.

Having given the matter some thought, Father sent for me. He told me that he planned to have all the family home in 1952, for his 90th birthday. It would therefore be premature to send for my children at this stage. He also said that much as he would like to help me with the car he was very short of ready cash and could not afford

\*Note: This was the situation in 1950

it. 'I understand that you are very friendly with His Excellency?' (I had told him that H.E. had asked me to broadcast on my return to Australia. Father had also heard that I was due to have an informal lunch at Government House before my departure for Melbourne). 'Now', he continued, 'why don't you suggest to H.E. to speed up compensation for my losses incurred in the war? I would then be in a better position to help you.'

'Father,' I replied. 'I think it is a wonderful idea for you to have all the family home to celebrate your 90th birthday. I hadn't known of your intention or I wouldn't have suggested your sending for the children now. As regards the car, if you are short of ready cash, I am quite prepared to accept your decision. But to speak to H.E. is a different matter. I know that you have lost a great deal,' I went on, 'so have I. But so have many other people - some much more than either of us. Many will not have even the compensations which you and I have been blessed with. Speaking for myself, I have lost Billy and he is irreplaceable. What do material things matter?' I thought that he would have been offended at my speaking to him in this manner but, instead, he told me that he admired my philosophy. At last, he said, he could understand how it was that I could be so cheerful in the face of all I had suffered. The very next day his secretary telephoned me to say that Father had received an unexpected repayment of a loan and was therefore able to let me have the money I needed for the car. Elizabeth and John had their trip too at the end of the year. They went at the invitation of Vic and M.K. Nor was Father in any way offended.

There had been a good deal of publicity in the press about the Imperial War Graves Commission assuming responsibility for the Yokohama British War Cemetery, and of its work in the development of the area to make it comparable with other war cemeteries in the world. I felt a sudden overwhelming desire for a pilgrimage to this cemetery but found, on enquiry, that travel to Japan was strictly controlled, entry being restricted to traders and industrialists.

I was shocked and disappointed beyond measure but the obstacles I encountered made me all the more determined to go. When they found that I could not be dissuaded, the Department of Supply and Distribution cabled the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of Allied Power (SCAP) and permission, on compassionate grounds, was granted. M.K. arranged for me to stay, whilst in Tokyo, at the home of Jardine's *Taipan*, Mr E. Pollock, and I left by BOAC plane at

8 a.m. on Saturday, 3rd June. At the end of a seven-hour flight I was met at Haneda airport by the Hong Kong Government Representative, Mr W.J. Anderson, who was to be responsible for me. He put me on the plane two days later when, having accomplished my mission, I left for Hong Kong.

Mr Anderson was another old friend. His wife had been our girl guide commissioner and he a fellow-internee in Stanley Camp. At war's end he was serving a fifteen-year gaol sentence imposed by the Japanese, for the part he was supposed to have played in the abortive mass escape of police from Stanley Camp in 1943. Mr Anderson had been in charge of the canteen and it had been alleged that it was through our provisions that messages had been sent out, and radio spare parts brought into the camp. Again I quote:

"Attractively planned and laid out in Yuenchi Park, the British Commonwealth War Cemetery is situated in Hodogaya, six miles outside of Yokohama - a twenty-five mile run from Tokyo. I was sent by car, escorted by Mr Roy Johnstone, of Jardine's. The cemetery was originally constructed by the Australian War Graves Group in 1945. It is the only one of its kind in Japan. The United Kingdom, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand, and Indian Forces, each occupies a separate section, with the first three having each a Cross of Sacrifice. A beautifully designed shrine holds the ashes of 332 servicemen whose remains were cremated. Their names are inscribed on the inner walls of the shrine. From the well-kept records, Billy's grave was located easily and, only a few short yards away, was that of James Mackenzie Jack -

'and in their death they were not divided.'

"The quiet dignity of the planning, the horticultural excellence of each section where native trees had been planted, the calm reflections from the pools of remembrance, and the exquisite beauty of natural features skilfully employed to create an atmosphere of peaceful repose, all contributed to give a lasting impression. I came away humbled, and filled with gratitude too, for the experience. I carried with me a realization that no one person's effort could ever approach the magnificence achieved. Moreover, the promise of diligent care in perpetuity will make the cemetery live on forever. I felt proud and happy to leave Billy there."

When I left for Melbourne I carried with me Billy's medals, which I had mounted in a gold frame. They have been given to John. I carried also the medals of Una's husband, Harold Brown. When she

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saw them, she burst into tears: she told me later that she realized, for the first time, that Harold was no more.



21. *The Commonwealth War Cemetery, Yokohama.*



22. *The Shrine in the Garden of Remembrance.*

War Memorial, Hong Kong

## 17 A NEW REGIME

I returned to Melbourne and the Department in time to assist with final preparations for the presentation of *Studies in Pathology* to Professor MacCallum. The ceremony was held on his 65th birthday on 14 July (1950). Although it was still winter the morning sun, breaking through the clouds, had given a slight warmth to the chilly atmosphere as over two hundred guests packed into the Private Dining Room of Union House.

Edgar King made a short speech and presented the leather-bound *Festschrift*\* on behalf of his colleagues. It was a fine tribute, worthy of the master and of those who had sat at his feet. Peter MacCallum was delighted and visibly moved.

*Studies in Pathology*, edited by E.S.J. King, T.E. Lowe and L.B. Cox, is a volume of twenty-two essays on varying aspects of general and special pathology. It is a book of 350 pages of which any academic department would justly feel proud. The range of subjects in some measure indicates the breadth of outlook which, for a quarter of a century, Peter MacCallum had inculcated in the School. There is appended a list of subscribers of over 800 names - all of whom had supported the project - surely a concrete demonstration of Peter MacCallum's influence reaching out far beyond the confines of his colleagues and immediate friends. Names of contributors to the essays include those of G.R. Cameron, Professor of Pathology of the University College Hospital of the University of London who remained on the staff for a short while after MacCallum's appointment to the Chair; and of W.B. Wartmann, Morrison Professor of Pathology, Northwestern University, Chicago, USA, who gave invaluable assistance to the Department during the difficult years (1942-44) when he was pathologist to the Fourth General Hospital, US Army (then stationed in Melbourne).

The presentation of the portrait by Council took place later in the year. Meanwhile Professor MacCallum's last months slipped by all too quickly. On his retirement, he was named Professor Emeritus. He was to become National Chairman of the Australian Red Cross Society, a full-time appointment. At the same time he would continue his chairmanship of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria. Victorians owe the establishment of a therapeutic clinic in 1952 mainly to his generous and

untiring efforts. The naming of this establishment after him is another sign of Victoria's gratitude for his work in the cancer field.

Suddenly, and sadly for me, Professor MacCallum, to use his own words, had 'handed over the Department and Edgar King to Mrs Gittins'. But Mrs Gittins felt none too secure as the new Professor took office.

Edgar Samuel John King, holding the doctorates of Science and of Medicine, the degree of Master of Surgery and the fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons of England and of its Australasian counterpart, assumed office as Professor of Pathology in the University of Melbourne on the first Monday in March, 1951. His first act was to make a tour of the Department on which he asked me to accompany him. As we passed Mr Guthrie's door, Jim Guthrie was invited to join us. During the tour we went into every room where he scrutinized everything - accommodation, equipment and all. The photographic room received his severest criticism. The epidiascope in the lecture theatre was fit only for the scrap heap, he said, the Museum was a disgrace and, above all, there had to be more room.

We dropped Mr Guthrie in his room and returning to mine, he declared almost belligerently:

'I suppose I shall have to learn to tell you where I go and what I do with myself? I am not used to that sort of thing.'

I could not help replying:

'It is entirely up to you, Professor. You don't have to do it but you will find things much easier if you did.'

And so began a fifteen-year association. It was an armed truce to begin with, nor did we ever become the most ardent of friends but we worked in tacit harmony for a common purpose and shared a common bond in our mutual affection for the "Old Prof". This transcended any incompatibility. Above all, there was mutual respect and mutual trust.

Professor King spent a lot of time in the Department. Having been a busy surgeon, I suppose he was used to an early start. He was in his office long before anyone else. One morning, as soon as he heard me in my room he came out and asked:

'Have you had any experience of proof-reading?'

'No, Professor,' I replied.

'And why not?'

'Professor MacCallum, Dr Bowden and a few of the others read their own proofs. There weren't many in any case. Everyone was

too busy teaching.'

'The sooner you learn the better; there will be plenty for you to read.'

How right his forecast. From then on everyone was set to work. The motto became: "We publish or we perish!"

It was not that he spared himself. He worked harder than anyone else: encouraging, pushing, driving his staff morning, noon and night. He even pushed the part-time staff into writing up cases of interest from the hospitals. Any equipment that might help a worker was provided. If we needed more technicians, he managed to get them. My staff were encouraged and driven almost beyond their physical capacity. It says much for the loyalty and tolerance of Jessie Ling, Sandra Fehring, Wendy van Baer, and later, Nora Tobin that they (with the exception these days of Sandra who is no longer with us) as well as Betty Hollingworth, who began with Professor MacCallum, have remained my friends. They all have their own families now but when December comes around we still gather for an evening meal when we revive old memories.

Before long papers were produced and then proofs came rolling in. But where did he get the funds to do all this? Professor King managed to squeeze a grant of six thousand pounds - an unheard of sum - from the University to place another floor on the upper museum. We lost the natural lighting for the specimen cases downstairs but gained in the process SIX extra rooms above. The first, a larger room, became a much needed Staff Room. It was fitted with cupboards and a stainless steel sink. Adjoining this were five "temporary" rooms to provide accommodation and a little privacy for new research staff to come. In due course the insides of the museum cases were painted and lit with fluorescent tubes. We raised the money for this, case by case, and acknowledged the gifts from donors by a little ceremonial occasion at which a silver plaque was unveiled.

Before this happened, though, we were forced to await the pleasure of the Maintenance Department. It had been intended that the work would be done during the summer vacation of 1951/2. We waited and waited until early in March and just as the second teaching term was about to begin a message came from Mr Gray that workmen could be with us 'early on the coming Monday', which coincided with the first day of the new term. The entire Department spent the whole week-end moving the 12,000 specimens out of the Museum into wherever space could be found for their

temporary storage. Certain selected ones were kept aside for teaching purposes, and these were placed on cleared shelves at the far end of the Museum where tutorials were to be held. Being fixtures, the cases stood where they were, but were carefully covered by protective soft matting. Then after scaffolding had been erected, supporting pillars reinforced, and the teaching programme completely disorganized, Mr Gray announced that we were again to wait indefinitely (because of the shortage of steel due to the post-war building programme) for girders to be placed across from gallery to gallery before the upstairs flooring could be laid. The weeks went by and Mr Gray kept away - there was nothing he could do for us - and then, a member of the staff who happened to know someone who was closely connected with someone high up at John Lysaght (Aust.) Ltd., the great steel people in NSW, put in a good word on our behalf. This led to our order receiving "most favoured treatment".

Edgar King was an impatient man. Whatever he wanted he wished to put into effect immediately. Also, having been a surgeon, he knew how anxious surgeons were to know the results of the tissue they sent in for investigation and diagnosis. He fretted at the enforced delay necessitated by the various processes in the preparation of sections of the material to be studied and diagnosed. It was therefore impossible for the reports to be sent out until the third day. At this time there was introduced into Australia an automatic tissue processing machine. This would allow the little bits of tissue to be processed throughout the night so that they could be blocked (in the paraffin in which they had been soaked), cooled, sectioned and stained for microscopic examination. Reports could then be sent out 24 hours after they were received. This machine, known as the *Histokine*, seemed to be an answer to his predicament but it would cost eight hundred pounds. Our annual "vote" from the University at that time was only seven hundred and twenty five pounds. With all our other requirements, how in the world would we be able to afford the apparatus?

I persuaded Professor King to let me speak to the Accountant to see if anything could be done to help us. The Accountant at that time was Mr R.P. Temby who was known to be an extremely cautious person, but I felt that if a proper approach was made, he would, at least, give me a fair hearing.

When I saw him I explained our problem as briefly as possible and proposed that the University might give us an advance of eight

hundred pounds for the purchase of a piece of equipment which would cut the delay in our pathology service by more than a half, the full amount to be repaid in six month's time. He decided to trust me. Our purchase of the *Histokine* from Thomas Optical & Scientific Instruments Co.Ltd. in May 1951 heralded an era of increasingly sophisticated mechanical aids in the Department. In the office, even, we had several tape recorders and ultimately an IBM Executive and other electric typewriters.

At the same time negotiations for the loan established a rapport between the Accountant and myself which was to prove of benefit to both the Accounts Department and our own for many years to come. Only recently, and this is over twenty years later, it was repeated to me that a senior officer in the University had held me up as a shining example of someone whose books always tallied with those held in the Accounts Office. Within the Department, however, I was known to be the financial genius who could not add two and two together to make four! Actually, although I was not too good at mental arithmetic, I had a good memory. My secret lay in the fact that I always kept in mind a figure which represented the maximum amount of money that we could afford together with an inflexible determination never to exceed that amount in expenditure. I should add, however, the credit for the manner in which the accounts of the Pathology Department were kept should go entirely to Sandra Fehring who was meticulous in the manner in which she balanced the books on my behalf. This was not always an easy matter because, as time went on, we received grants from a number of organizations such as the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Mental Health Research Fund, the Life Insurance Medical Research Fund of Australia and New Zealand, and from general University research funds as well as others. To keep these grants separate and not to overspend on any of them whilst charging each account only for expenses incurred by its specific worker required a certain amount of thought and discretion. Professor King trusted me and I don't think, with Sandra's help, I ever let him down.

The Professor himself was extraordinarily generous. The salaries of professors in those days were modest in the extreme but as far as professors of pathology were concerned they had the right of private practice. In Professor MacCallum's day we charged three guineas a report for private patients, one pound ten shillings and sixpence for intermediate and one guinea for public patients -

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at the recommendation of the doctor or hospital concerned. The same charges were made at the beginning of Professor King's time until decimal currency came in in February 1966 and the fee was changed to \$5, \$3 and one dollar. When cheques came in, they were all sent into the "office" to be added to our annual apparatus vote.

As the work load increased due to the rapidity with which reports were despatched the incoming cheques increased in like proportion. And yet for every item of expenditure over a certain amount (which I cannot now recall) we had to get the special permission of the Accountant. This did not at all appeal to the Professor's independent nature. I suggested to him that perhaps we could get permission to start a special fund into which these cheques could be paid. And so the "Pathology Department Special Fund" was established. At the same time we established our independence: as authority for payments made from this fund remained in the hands of Professor King and, in his absence, his deputy, or even myself as a temporary measure. I should add, too, that I never exercised this privilege - there was never a need as Professor King never took a holiday.

## 18 FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

The year 1952 was memorable. Elizabeth, having passed her final examinations at the end of the previous year, was to take out her degree of Bachelor of Science in April. We also had the excitement of her wedding. She had stated her wish not to be married on a Saturday as so many people did. 'In that case', I said, 'Why don't you pick on the twenty-ninth of February? I am sure no one else would do so.'

'Oh, no,' she said. 'If we did we would have an anniversary only once in every four years.'

Stewart, however, agreed with me as he usually did. It was not to gain my favour - he knew he had that wholeheartedly. We had seen a good deal of him especially during the past two years and the more I saw the better I liked him. He never intruded during the week because Elizabeth was working, but he was a regular caller at the week-ends. In all our association, my every wish was literally his command.

Stewart Edward Doery was from the country. Like Norman and Thelma Jones, his parents had a sheep property and grew wheat and other crops as well; but whereas the Joneses were at Benalla, to the north-east of Melbourne, the Doerys were in Westmere, beyond Ballarat, in Western Victoria.

Mrs Doery was Scottish, Stewart's father having met her when he spent the occasional recreation leave in Scotland during the First World War. He had served with the AIF. Returning to Australia, he built a house on the property where, until that time, he had made do with temporary accommodation. He then went back to Scotland in 1922, married her and brought her home. Stewart was one of four children.

On leaving boarding school at Geelong College, Stewart had lived for a year with his aunt, Mrs Webb, in Deepdene before he joined the RAAF. Upon his discharge in 1947 he worked at his Uncle Harry Doery's firm of Davis, Doery Pty Ltd in Swanston Street, and lived in a young men's hostel in South Yarra.

It was at Mrs Webb's that he had met Elizabeth. From then on, as far as I could gather, there had been no one else for either of them. And now, after some seven years of a growing friendship, they were ready to be married.

Father, Mr and Mrs Gittins and others were notified and presents and good wishes flowed in. Friday, 29 February, was settled for the

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wedding and, with Father's generous present, we received our friends in a small reception room at the Hotel Windsor. My letter to the family dated the first day of March describes the proceedings in some detail. This is what I said:

"... The days before the wedding were a succession of delightful visits from friends, and answering calls from messengers, the postman and telegraph boys. It was all most exciting and I am glad to say that, at no time was I disturbed by that feeling of panic, as when things get beyond you. With the assistance of our friends, all was under control.

"On Thursday, 28th, John came home from school. By this time I was all but purring: we were confident that, on the morrow, the sun would shine.

"Friday dawned cloudy, with that morning mist which, in Melbourne, promises a perfect day. Rosalind Bain and her mother had kindly undertaken to decorate the church. There was little else left to be done.

"We dressed at *Varndean*, the home of the Lionel Adamses. When the photographer arrived at 3.30 p.m. we were all ready. Elizabeth looked lovely in her gown of ivory coloured Chinese tribute satin, and the bridesmaids Jeannie Jones and Julie Adams, in their dresses of nylon net of a pale chartreuse colour, added a touch of character and charm. Elizabeth carried a bouquet of tuberoses and tree lily-of-the-valley. The bridesmaids had posies of hydrangea in a background of ivy leaves. We could not have had a more perfect setting. The glorious sunshine heightened the light and shade of the Adams's garden, evidence of which you will see in the photographs.

"All was ready at Scots Church in Collins Street, in the city. The communion table was decorated with white gladioli, chrysanthemum and hydrangea; white satin ribbon tied sprigs of orange blossom from the Bains' garden to the pews. The church was a credit to the morning's effort. As the organ played Lohengrin's first notes, everyone half turned to watch Elizabeth, attended by her bridesmaids, walk up the long aisle on the arm of Dr W. McL. Rose. I thought: if it had been Billy, how pleased and proud he would have been.

"The service was conducted by the Reverend James George. We sang the twenty-third Psalm; the Minister read Chapter 13, I. Corinthians; and then the Hymn 'O Perfect Love' . . . Mendelsohn's *Wedding March*, and we followed a radiantly happy couple down the

aisle: Best Man (Geoff Backhouse) with Jeannie Jones; Groomsman (Stewart's brother, Derek) with Julie Adams; Mr Doery and I; Mrs Doery with John; and lastly, Mr John Adam and Dr Rose.

"The Hotel Windsor had set aside its private reception room for our party and an informal supper allowed us to move freely among our guests. I would not have believed it possible that a mother of the bride could have felt so relaxed and carefree. When supper had ended Lionel Adams took over as Master of Ceremonies for the more formal toasts and speeches.

"After 'The Queen', Mr John Adam was asked to toast 'Bride and Groom', which he gave in his usual inimitable manner and to which Stewart replied. John expressed my thanks in answer to Mr Webb's speech for 'The Parents'. Frank Doery's reply introduced 'Our Guests'. Nor were you forgotton on this happy occasion. *Home Sweet Home* was played on the piano and Norman Jones did justice to 'Our Absent Relatives and Friends' . . .

"There is no need for me to say how very much I missed you or how my thoughts were with you all. Through Father's generosity, your loving thoughts and the support given by our friends, Elizabeth and Stewart have had a grand beginning. The 29th February, 1952, will be a day to be remembered, and one upon which we shall always look back with pride and happiness. To you and to all our friends I send our greetings and tender my heart-felt thanks."

Lionel and Molly were soon to visit Hong Kong on their way to the United Kingdom. We sent with them the top tier of the wedding cake. Elizabeth and Stewart spent their honeymoon in Hobart and returned to Melbourne to the further excitement of buying a house. It was to be three months before they could move in. Meanwhile, the large flat in Kew held us more than adequately.

Elizabeth graduated Bachelor of Science on 5 April, 1952. The degree ceremony was held in the Union Theatre, Wilson Hall having been destroyed by fire during one of our heat-waves earlier in the year.

At Elizabeth's decision to be married I had given consideration to the problem of permanent accommodation for John and myself. The Kew flat had served us well; however, self-ownership flats were being introduced in Melbourne and it was a scheme that had a strong appeal for me as it would give me the permanency needed without the detailed responsibilities which a house would carry.

When I discussed the problem with Bill Rose he agreed that it

would be an ideal solution. He told me that there were some quite nice ones going up on St Kilda Road which he had investigated on behalf of his parents and suggested that I should see the agents as soon as I could because they seemed to be very popular.

I took his advice and immediately paid a deposit for one of two flats as yet unreserved while Weigall and Crowther investigated details of articles of association and the like on my behalf.

The building, which would not be ready for about a year, was situated at No.485-489 St Kilda Road, between Toorak and Commercial Roads. It was to be of three storeys high, over open shelters for owners' cars. The flat I selected was on the middle floor at the back and, later, when I could go into the building and look out of the window, all I could see was the spire of Christ Church in South Yarra over the tops of the trees; the rest was just parkland. When, eventually, I first went to live there, I would sometimes be awakened by the blood-curdling "laugh" of the kookaburra and once on a freezingly cold morning I saw a red robin hopping around outside my window in search of the early worm.

Father had not forgotten his promise of sending for us at the end of the year, although in July he had written to say that because of the Korean War he had decided not to hold a party on his 90th birthday in December. However, a little later he had changed his mind and if we would care to risk the journey, in spite of the situation, he said, he would be happy to send us whatever was required to enable all of us (including Stewart) to visit Hong Kong.

Professor King tried to stretch my annual leave as far as possible to enable me to have more time at home.

'Don't be too good to me,' I said, 'because if my father really needs me and can bring himself to ask me - he did that once before and I rejected him - I can hardly refuse him a second time. But whatever happens,' I added, 'I shall come back and see you properly fixed up before I leave the Department.'

Mrs King told me later that he had read my words as a declaration that I was contemplating leaving him and she had told him that if I did, he would have only himself to blame. She had warned him time and time again that he should make me feel more needed.

I left Melbourne on 17 December, to be followed a few days later by Elizabeth, Stewart and John. The rest of the family soon joined us. They had scattered in the post-war years. From England came Grace and her daughter Shirley, who was studying dentistry at London

University. They arrived with Vic's daughter, Vera, with her husband, Hui Yin Kan, and their infant son, Geoffrey. Kan was completing a graduate course in chemistry. From England also came Vic's son, Tak Shing, and Florence's Richard. The two were at King's College in Taunton, Somerset.

Eddie's school-girl daughters, Tony and Mary, arrived from New York, as did Robbie's son Bob, who was studying journalism over there. From California came Vic's eldest daughter, Phoebe, with her husband Howard Brown and their children, Brian and Cassie. The youngest of Vic's daughters, Rita, was studying medicine in the University of Hong Kong. Lastly, Robbie and Hesta flew over from Taipeh to join young Bob and their daughter, Min, who lived at *Idlewild*. Robbie now held the rank of Lt-General.

Eddie, Eva and Irene, with little Junie, lived also in different parts of *Idlewild*. It was a very large house and held them all comfortably. And how wonderful it was to be with everyone again. Ten years or more had passed since some had last met, and of the young ones several I had known only by name. Each had his (or her) tale to tell. The War had not been kind.

Now, however, as Father had wished and so generously arranged we were all home to celebrate with him on his 90th birthday. It was his aim to live to be 100 years of age.

Festivities began on the evening of the 21st when M.K. and Vic hosted a large gathering at a Chinese restaurant for family and friends to meet. I had known many since before the War, had gone through the trials of internment together; others I had met on previous visits. It was such a happy time for both young and old - a fitting prelude to the main event the following day.

*Idlewild* had been decorated with flowers, flags and bunting; fairy lights outlined its shape at night. The twenty-second day of December dawned fine, with light clouds, fanned by a slight breeze, drifting across an otherwise clear blue sky, one of those perfect days that Hong Kong can turn on at Christmas time.

A group of hired Chinese instrumentalists sat to the left of the entrance steps, ready to herald the arrival or departure of callers who came to wish Father a happy day and many more years of good health and happiness. Chinese customs were to be observed.

Inside the house, congratulatory scrolls sent by relatives and friends decorated the walls of passages and reception rooms. In the centre of the main room hung a large scroll with the Chinese character "Longevity" in front of which Father stood to receive his

friends. In his absence, for naturally he could not be present all the time, friends would bow to the scroll which represented him. One of the sons was always on hand to entertain the caller to a cup of tea and a taste of "long-life" noodles and yeast buns made in the shape of peaches and dipped in red dye for good luck.

Grandsons and grandsons-in-law acted as ushers and Stewart relished the role. He was intensely interested in all the customs, particularly the Chinese calligraphy which many callers used to sign their names in the visitors' book. The firecrackers fascinated him; compared to the single toys for children which were available in Melbourne at the time, the superb strings that emitted not only loud bangs but fiery sparks and sprays as well as pictorial flags and pictures were something he had never seen before - Father ordered more and yet more to be fired for Stewart's special benefit. The day ended happily at another wonderful meal at a Chinese restaurant - large as it was, *Idlewild* could not have held all the guests.

Father was like a child with his presents. Vic and M.K.'s had arrived the day before in the traditional manner: four large round lacquer boxes held within huge red string bags. These were carried by two men servants and accompanied by Vic's most accomplished amah who had been trained to say correct things at such occasions. The boxes contained fresh and tinned fruit, noodles and yeast buns and other traditional accompaniments together with a blue satin-brocade long gown with black satin short jacket such as were normally worn by Father and other Chinese gentlemen.

I cannot now remember what the others sent but we had brought him an Australian sheepskin rug. It was a really fine one and Father was delighted. He stroked its soft wool and placed the rug over his knees. He remarked that it was too good to lie on the floor. I am told that he did lay it on the floor in his bedroom but no one was allowed to walk over it. Hesta sent it back to me after Father's death four years later - it was still in its pristine condition.

Later Robbie and Hesta gave a dance at *Idlewild* for the young people and I was at the receiving end of one of his rare compliments. As we watched the young folk dancing, he said: 'Really, Jean, when your children were young, I used to think that they were absolute models of good behaviour and now, your Stewart, he is most certainly the pick of the younger generation! How do you do it? I would not have been human had I not blushed with pride.'

Florence and K.C. had us all up to lunch on another perfect day. K.C. was now Director of Medical and Health Services and they lived on the Peak in a house built by Mr Pegg, who had been Deputy Director of Public Works, for himself - the same Mr Pegg who had lived in the room next to ours in Stanley internment camp and had given me such good advice about making use of my father's name in Australia.

The house was on Mt. Cameron with a magnificent view of the harbour and the Kowloon hills from its front windows. The back looked far out on to the South China Sea. Had Mr Pegg tried to describe this to me in Stanley, I would not have believed him. And yet the picture I carried away on that day was not of the view but of Eddie, at the age of 50 years and on artificial legs - one above the ankle, the other below the knee - the result of war-time injury, riding a motor cycle around the Yeo's lawn. I suppose, with all the young ones around him, he could not help but show off.

The young people were on a hike and we older ones had had lunch with Grace and Horace at Tytam. Entirely happy and contented, we sat on the lawn basking in the warm sunshine. Of a sudden I felt a chill. It was not because the sun had gone behind a cloud - the sky was as blue as ever - but thoughts of going back to Melbourne clouded my own happiness. Was I right in casting aside all this love and companionship to go back to a virtual wilderness? I voiced aloud my apprehension.

'I don't know why you don't make up your mind to stay - or at least to go and fix things up over there and then come back to live,' Grace was saying.

'I know, Grace, that would be the sensible thing to do,' I replied. 'The trouble is, I don't know that I would be happy here, either. It is not the place but me.'

'You wouldn't know,' Grace pursued, 'unless you tried it out. Don't you think you have made a martyr of yourself for long enough?'

'It's my job, you see. I rather like my work. Were I to leave it and then find that I wasn't happy here, I could hardly expect Professor King to hold it whilst I carried out an experiment.'

'With your ability,' Grace continued, 'you could easily find another job anywhere.'

'Not one with comparable responsibility. I am certain that the place does not exist, except in the Pathology Department, into which I could fit so nicely and have such a "say" in policy matters.'

I was not aware that I had said anything amusing but Hesta burst

out laughing.

'Really, Jean' she said, 'how like your brother and your father you are. You Ho Tungs are never happy unless you hold the reins.'

The days slipped by. Of a sudden it was the middle of January and it was time for Elizabeth and Stewart to leave. John and I were to stay a week longer - there was no reason for us to rush. John had sat for his School Leaving Certificate examinations at the end of 1952; his results now came through by cable: he had passed in seven subjects! So we stayed another week and he returned to school to be awarded his house colours for work.

Professor King had missed me although he would never have admitted it. But he did tell me that I had better go and make my peace with "your friends across the way". He was no longer on speaking terms with them.

'Whatever I was doing', he explained, 'I had to answer the telephone because Mr Temby wished to speak to me. Finally I lost patience completely and told him to keep his questions until your return - he even had the cheek to tell me that he couldn't accept my word for some trifling matter! I refused to have anything to do with him after that.'

Rupert Percy Temby, Accountant, was a cautious man. He resembled my Father in some respects. Before I could sit down, his doors had opened three times with his assistants reminding him not to forget to ask Mrs Gittins about this or that.

I found that things had indeed gone badly between the two Departments, so much so that all communication had ceased. The matter of most concern to Mr Temby was an account from King & Godfrey, the grocers, for two dozen bottles of beer shortly before Christmas.

You needn't tell me that they didn't have a whopping big Christmas party the minute your back was turned. And your Professor has authorized payment for it from the Police Research Fund!'

You are quite wrong in your surmise, Mr Temby. I happen to know that the beer was for our research into blood alcohol levels in a study we are doing on behalf of the Police Department. The Police send their men up to be used as guinea pigs - to see how much a person can take without losing control of his mental and physical faculties.'

All Mr Temby's worries seemed to disperse at this explanation! He did not press me further. It was then my turn to ask him why he

would not accept Professor King's word 'for some trifling matter'. I was unable to find out what exactly he did say but what he meant was that because of audit requirements he needed the Professor's written authorisation for the purchase of some special equipment, the cost of which was in excess of the normal limit.

No apologies were exchanged. That would have been more than one might expect of either party. From my own point of view, however, I was completely satisfied that, not only was I happy in my work but I was really needed in the Department.

Elizabeth's marriage to an Australian and John's growing attachment to the Australian bush had cemented my ties to this country. The possession of my own home would most certainly add to my security and comfort. All that had been missing was Professor King's dependence on me to achieve all that he wished the Department to be - it now appeared that it was at last to become a reality. I was a stranger no more.

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## SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Cover

HMS *Vindex* (Captain J.D.L. Williams, RN) in Sydney Harbour 2 October, 1945. *Vindex* was bringing former POWs and Internees to freedom. From a photograph by W.A. Shearon, 176 George Street, Sydney.

### Endpapers

Street Map of the City of Melbourne drawn by Elizabeth, 1945.

### Between pages 18 and 19 - *Hong Kong 1840 - 1940*

1. The "barren rock" of Queen Victoria's day - 'Few Thought Much of the New Acquisition'.  
From a colour plate in *Hong Kong* by Harold Ingrams, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. 1952. Facing p.36. (*NE view of Victoria, 1843. Aquatint, by J. Prendergast. Chater Collection*).
2. The waterfront 100 years later. From an illustration in *Hong Kong in its geographical setting*. S.G. Davis, W.M. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. London. 1949. Between pages 112 and 113

### Reverse - *My Parents: Sir Robert and Lady Clara Ho Tung*.

(Photographs from Family Album)

3. My Father in 1949. From an oil portrait by Sir Oswald Burley which hangs in the Board Room of Jardine, Matheson and Co. Ltd., Hong Kong.
4. My Mother in 1928. From a portrait by Van Dyke of London.

### Between pages 36 and 37 - *The Family in 1940* (Family Album).

5. Billy and me on the beach, Castle Peak, New Territories.
6. Billy with our dog, *Tarzan*, at the foot of Lion Rock, Kowloon Tong.
7. Elizabeth and John at home.

### Reverse - *Five years on - in Melbourne* (Family Album).

8. Elizabeth
9. John

## A STRANGER NO MORE

Between pages 56 and 57 - *Melbourne in the 1940s*.

10. Flinders Street Railway Station - from the Cato Photographic Collection held by the La Trobe Library of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.
11. Wilson Hall, Melbourne University - from *Melbourne* by Jack Cato, Georgian House Pty. Ltd. (1949). The building was destroyed by fire on 25 January 1952. Photographs by Jack Cato, FRPS, reproduced with permission.

*Reverse - Department of Pathology, The University of Melbourne.*

12. The building. Photograph by Jean Gittins
13. Professor Peter MacCallum with Professor E.S.J. King (left) and Professor R.D. Wright (right).  
From *The Melbourne School of Pathology - Phases and Contrasts* (1962) reproduced with permission of Professor John V. Hurley.

Between pages 96 and 97 - *Within the Department*

14. The Main Entrance Hall.
15. The Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Pathology.  
From *The Melbourne School of Pathology - Phases and Contrasts* (1962) reproduced with permission of Professor John V. Hurley.

*Reverse -*

16. Architect's Drawing: The House I did not Build (Family Album).

Between pages 108 and 109 - *Hong Kong Again*

17. Rickshaw Coolies waiting for business.  
From an illustration in *At the Peak* by Paul Gillingham, Macmillan Publishers Limited, Hong Kong (1983) page 88.
18. The Peak Tram.  
From a postcard of the time (1946).

## SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### *Reverse - My Father's Residences.*

19. "Idlewild", in Seymour Road, mid-levels. (Family Album).
20. "The Falls", on the Peak.

From an illustration in *At the Peak* by Paul Gillingham, Macmillan Publishers Limited, Hong Kong (1983) page 21.

*Note:* The illustration also shows the two houses in which the family originally lived: "Dunford" (extreme left background) and the two-storeyed "The Chalet", in which I was born. Tennis courts on two levels separated the two houses. The properties were sold when we moved into "The Falls" early in 1929.

### Between pages 154 and 155 - *War Memorials* (Family Album).

21. Commonwealth War Cemetery, Yokohama.  
Gravestone quotation: *To Lucasta, Going To The Wars*: Richard Lovelace.

### *Reverse*

22. The Shrine in the Garden of Remembrance, Hong Kong.



Spencer Street

King Street

William Street

Queen Street

Bourke

Collins

Flinders

Latrobe

Lonsdale

'It is so simple, Mother - Melbourne is so well laid out'.

Yarra River

Street

Lt Lonsdale

Street

Lt Bourke

Street

Street

Lt Collins

Swanson

Russell

Street

Exhibition

Spring

Street

Flinders La

Street

Princes Bridge

City of Melbourne  
(Elizabeth - 1945)



Jean Gittins, daughter of Sir Robert and Lady Clara Ho Tung, was born and educated in Hong Kong. She was married in 1929 to Billy (W.M.) Gittins. They had two children.

As clouds of war in Europe deepened and loomed towards the East, Billy joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps and Jean, newly appointed Secretary of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, under-

took training in hospital administration in preparation for war - Hong Kong University was to be a Relief Hospital at the outbreak of hostilities. Elizabeth and John were sent to friends in Melbourne.

At the fall of Hong Kong, Billy was taken prisoner-of-war and, in 1943, was transported to Japan from where he did not return; Jean was interned with the rest of the Hong Kong University staff for the duration of the War. HMS *Vindex* brought her to Australia.

The book tells of Jean's experiences in Melbourne where she joins the Department of Pathology of the University of Melbourne to become Secretary to Professor Peter, later Sir Peter, MacCallum and, at his retirement, to Professor E.S.J. King and the Department of Pathology. Although many hands were stretched out to help her, it was to be seven long years before she could feel no longer a stranger in, what was to her, a strange land.